

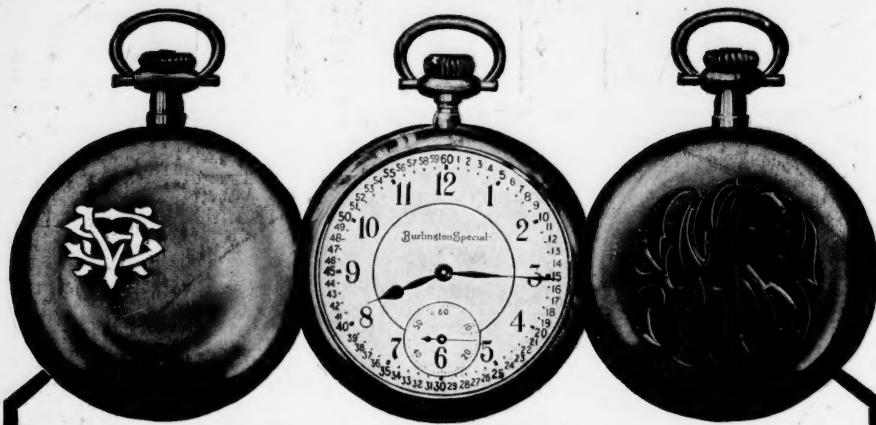
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X



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No. 6

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The Moon Wasters

By Inez Thompson

ILLUSTRATED BY A. G. LEARNED

CHAPTER I.

HE was afraid. Even as he admitted it to himself, half grimacing, half scowling, Gardiner felt the little tweak of injured muscle that prevented his right eyebrow from performing a satisfactory frown, and mechanically smoothed his hair over the old, concealed scalp scar.

The movement recalled to him that he hadn't felt any fear at all—nothing but hot, contemptuous anger—on that day, six years back, when he had caught up a fencing foil, cuffed two scared privates aside, and rushed out from the captain's quarters into a blazing tropic noon to interfere with the hideous running amuck of a fanatic Moro. And all that the present moment required of him was the parting of tapestry hangings, a dozen feet ahead, that separated him from chattering, laughing, tea-drinking old friends—and from Carolyn Sayre.

It was partly because of Carolyn that he dreaded the meeting. She had made it gently clear to him, three years before, that his panic-lessened fortune must be increased before she be asked to share it; and with that alluring end in view, he had gone South to give personal supervision to his mill property. Three years—and his income was less by several hundreds; for he had come

face to face with conditions that made success a sickening impossibility. Child labor had been a meaningless term to him until he had seen—what he had seen!

He turned aside past an intricately carved antique screen, to a French window that opened from the long corridor to a flagged terrace. Crystal rods of summer rain shattered on the polished stones, bruised and beat the flowers in the great urns that flanked the steps, and dimmed the vista of terraces and gardens and park with a glimmering, translucent screen. He drew in a great breath of damp, sweet air, and then scowled his half scowl as he took in the costliness of the outlook. His Cousin Agatha, whose guest he was, had concentrated coolly on the business of a satisfactory marriage after the shrinking of the family fortune; and in half of the three years had selected, married, rejuvenated, and made a social power of that unassuming financier, Marshall Cadmore.

Agatha was an exquisite and delightful little body; but Gardiner knew the cold scorn she felt for the reason of his deprivations, and understood that she fully intended to laugh and scold and snub him out of such nonsense. And all the social world, of which that gay company on the other side of the tapestries was a prototype, would be

one with Agatha in their contempt for his ridiculous philanthropy. It was that laughter of his world that he dreaded. It would be a pricking to death by honeyed needles. And sometimes privately he had been heartily sick of his gray exile and hopeless toil, and had wondered whether he wasn't the fool that they called him.

When he caught himself wondering again, he said a vicious word, aloud, and turned with squared shoulders. Some one on the other side of the tapes-tries came forward at that instant, and a hand thrust through the folds. It was pure, unconsidered, and perhaps cowardly, impulse that pivoted Gardiner about and thrust him into hiding behind the carved screen. The brisk passing steps on the polished floor cov-ered the gasp that was forced from the girl behind the panel as his shoulder struck her smartly, and covered his ejaculation of surprise and dismay; then, as if by quick understanding, they were silent, pressed close together, her fragrant, damp hair against his cheek, till the man had whistled his way through the door at the corridor's end. At the click of its closing, the girl swiftly thrust out the center panel, and slipped around the other end so noise-lessly that it seemed a literal vanishing; and when Gardiner could move his oddly dumb and bewildered self after her, she was nowhere to be seen.

The drying spot on his cheek was pleasant proof that he hadn't dreamed her. She might have been the spirit of the August rain, with her drenched-flower face, her wet hair, her eyes like dusky pools, and the thin stuff of her gown melted against her slim shoulders and arms. And there he started to full comprehension that it was his unfor-givable loitering that had kept the rain-soaked little thing penned behind the screen, and that she might, even now, be behind one of the unfamiliar doors, waiting his departure.

He walked hurriedly to the tapestry curtains, and through. There went up a shout and a shrill of "Eric!"

He was a bit dizzy when that bom-bardment of greeting was over. Caro-

lyn Sayre, alone, stood apart, but when he turned to her she gave him both hands with a radiant smile; and when the flurry subsided, he found him-self, as if there had been no three-year interval, on a low seat beside her chair, her white hand with its great sapphire resting on the carven arm close to his sleeve. He was still poor—why was she so kind?

When he could manage it unobserved, he looked intently up at her; and with-out moving her fair head, she turned her eyes to his with an expression equally intent and indefinable. He found himself drowning, as of old, in those violet depths—when all at once the girl who had been behind the screen came to his mind, so vividly that he was sure she had come into the room, and turned his head sharply, half rising. He met, instead, his Cousin Agatha's look, fixed on him in obvious concern; and, with a birdlike fluffing of her tinted draperies, she stood, by way of signal for separating, and beckoned her just-arrived relative to her imperiously.

"Oh—oh, Agatha!" Ross Owen pro-ested, flinging his great arm across Gardiner's shoulders. "Ricky needs to go with me for a smoke, y'know!"

"But I say he shall go with me," she defied the ring of males, "because I shan't get a word with him after this hour."

From the turn in the staircase, as they went up, Gardiner looked back at the dozen grouped picturesquely against the dark shimmer of paneled oak, with the broad splashes of firelight pooling in an old tapestry behind them, and glowing warm on frocks and shirt fronts. At that instant the electrics flared alive, and one bronze electrolier behind Carolyn Sayre flooded her with mellow radiance, haloed her hair, and illumined her face with saintlike effect. Gardiner's step lagged, and his cousin's fingers nipped his arm.

The door of the rose-and-silver bou-doir closed behind them vigorously, and Agatha faced him in exasperation.

"Now, then, there are three things I want to know, Rick: First, whether it's true that you're not back to stay;

second, why you won't borrow money to set your mills in shape to run full time; and last, whether you have come back to propose to Carolyn?"

Gardiner stood at attention.

"To your first — yes, ma'am," he answered meekly. "To your second 'because.' To your third, no, ma'am."

The sparkling, dark eyes grew shrewd.

"Well, I'll say nothing — yet — to your first and second; but if Carolyn really wants you, as I'm beginning to think she does, she'll get you! Now, you sit here till I call Marsh. He wants to talk to you about the mill."

Gardiner smiled crookedly after her attractive back. Nobody save himself could know how thoroughly he had fought out the question of letting Carolyn Sayre's exquisite, idle hand outweigh the shrunken bodies and starved souls of the little slaves whose former state he sickened at recalling. Still, he might be doing Carolyn an injustice. Suppose he explained things to her and she agreed with what he was doing —



They were young, on a summer morning, and they had met before — twice.

Lights snapped on in the next room, and brought him back to actualities with a start. Through the opening in the hangings, he saw the girl who had been behind the hall screen, in line between his eyes and a cheval glass, so that he saw two of her as she stood sorting a bunch of keys. Her hair was smoothed into a braid about her head, and shone under the strong light like copper, dull and burnished; her white frock came to her white-clad ankles, and left her slender forearms bare. Such a little thing as

she was! Her profile, drawn in a soft, bright outline by the illumination, and the contour of oval cheek, round chin, and slim throat, with her placid brow and straight nose, marked her as very innocently young. She separated a key and stepped from his sight. He heard a soft click and the back-shooting of the wards of a wall safe, and she reappeared with a leather case in her hands. Opening it, she lifted out a necklace that shot sparks, tested the fastening, shook her head, and whipped about to fasten the safe. Carrying the case, she crossed before him again, the lights snapped off, and a door closed.

When he became aware of his mental state, Gardiner flushed in furious self-distract. He had fancied himself rather less caddish in matters of caste than most men of his class; yet the veriest snob of the lot couldn't have felt more shocked disapproval than he at finding *that girl a maid!*

Hardness dragged the good humor from his mouth as he stood to greet Agatha's big, gray, masterful husband; but even as their hands came together, he had an inspiration that set him to beaming boyishly. The girl wasn't a maid—*of course not!*—but a particular friend who had been permitted to keep her trinkets in Agatha's private safe. He meant to ask boldly about her, but Marshall Cadmore opened an uncomplimentary assault that kept the three heatedly arguing till the first gong. Agatha got the last word:

"I hate to have your silly feelings hurt, so I'll warn you that Lord Buckleigh comes to-morrow—simply because a certain lovely young woman is here. If you had any idea of proposing to Caro—"

"Cross my throat, I didn't!" Gardiner vowed; and was surprised to feel how true the denial was. He loped down the corridors, whistling, and wondering how he should open conversation with the girl when they should meet at dinner. After he had opened three doors and found himself hopelessly lost, he wondered whether he should get any dinner at all in such a labyrinth as this country place of Agatha's was proving.

He started back, turning left instead of right, and came to a short hall from which opened several rooms. The doors were not bronze-knobbed, and there were no bronze slots on the panels, for guests' cards; but there was a cheery red carpet, and a room on the right was brightly lighted, as he saw through the slightly opened door, and there came out a clinking of plates and silver. He rapped.

"Come!" said a woman's comfortable, elderly, and rather peremptory voice. He went in.

A woman, in black silk, whose outward seeming matched the voice, was carving a golden-brown chicken at a table laid for two, while a white-aproned maid arranged dishes from a laden tray. There were chintz upholstery, books, shaded reading lamps, a cat, and a fireplace with a bed of coals that offset the dreary sound of dashing rain against the pane. And the girl who had been behind the hall screen was on her knees before the fire, making toast.

Gardiner heard the conventional third of himself ask pardon, and recognizing the elderly woman as Agatha's house-keeper, explain his predicament; but the unconventional two-thirds of him was obsessed with the girl, who looked at him briefly over her shoulder, flushed by the fire and with a confusion of recognition in her face. He bowed to her pointedly as he withdrew in charge of the maid. So she wasn't a guest, after all!

He was late to dinner, and distinctly didn't care. There was too much to eat and to drink, anyway, and he wished he dared tell the company of some of the unbelievable messes that he knew were set out that night on tables in his mill community. Through an evening of bridge and Coon-can he speculated sulkily on how many starved bodies could be plumped out and how many empty heads filled by the sacrifice of a few of the bright stones that twinkled on necks and fingers; and he wondered whether the girl might not be the house-keeper's niece or granddaughter, on a visit. It was unsettling to think of her as a lady's maid—but neither could he

picture her gambling politely at one of the little tables. He marveled that Carolyn Sayre could look so saintly pensive while she meditated on her amazingly clever bids!

He tried to stay awake and decide whether he loved Carolyn, after all, and whether he should try to explain his quixotic actions to her; but the face that came to him in the darkness was the drenched-flower face that had been so close to his own behind the carved screen, and the memory muddled his problems. He woke to find the morning world ashine from its yesterday's scrubbing, and a comradely, vagrant breeze softly whistling him out. Socialist though he called himself, he found it mightily agreeable to come from his sunken, silver-tapped plunge to the thermos bottle of hot chocolate and case of rolls that luxurious forethought provided for each guest's possible insomnia or early rising.

He found his way out by a veranda door, and came upon an old hound, meditating on a top step. Greeting given and accepted, they started off together. They were of one mind as to the Italian garden, the Japanese garden, and the rest; they raced straight through those marvelous constraints of nature, and sought the far orchards where the red-astrachan trees were scarlet with temptation. An interesting path led to the left, uphill, but the hound interfered by pointing suddenly to the right, where the tops of willows, under the hill, marked the course of a stream. With the ghost of a whimper, he plunged off to the unseen attraction, and Gardiner followed to investigate. And there was vouchsafed him a reward fitting for a true believer in *The Early Hour*.

CHAPTER II.

She was on one knee, reaching out to gather cress where the water ran shallow over gravel. She wore a clean, much-laundered little frock of blue, that modestly reflected the morning sky; her copper hair was burnished red-gold where the sun touched it, and her fin-

gers were rosy from the chill wet that clung in gem drops to her white forearm, as she flicked it daintily from the sprigs of green that she placed in a deep gathering basket.

His heart leaped to his throat at the sight, opposing painfully the fragment of apple that he was on the point of swallowing. That instant the hound sprawled agains her and upset her so that she sat back violently, propped by her outflung hands; and she looked up to see a crimson, bulgy-pocketed young man, bolting a mouthful of apple and choking croupily.

They were young, on a summer morning, and they had met before—twice. And so they laughed, and she flushed and scrambled up before he could put out a hand to help her, and he made a last desperate and successful swallow, and said: "I've been wanting to tell you how I came to dodge behind that screen, and to ask your pardon for—"

"But I think I quite understood," she interrupted, smiling. Six words. But no lady's maid and no housekeeper's kin in all his experience could have spoken them with just that inflection, in just that manner. The sophisticated third of him marveled, but the unanalytical two-thirds accepted her ecstatically as part and finish of the joyous hour. He constrained himself to go forward and set to picking cress.

"Want this for breakfast—or a salad?" he asked.

Now, there is no distrusting the matter-of-factness of everyday words, coupled with work. The faint, dubious shadow that he had spied on the girl's face lifted instantly.

"For breakfast," she replied, as casually as he had asked; and moving upstream a little, she bent to her task again.

Blue and gold and green and flower-starred, the world swam about him; and she beside him was a stream sprite, a dryad, the embodied essence of dawn. The cautious third of him held to cress-picking, but the pagan two-thirds yearned to do pagan things. When they came together with their handfuls at

the basket, he was shocked to immobility when every muscle involuntarily flexed to bend him forward to kiss her chilled, pink fingers; for he positively was not in the habit of such impulses.

The conventional third of him did some powerful satirizing. But as she stood, while he busied himself in self-berating silence, he chanced to look down at her shabby, turdy, small tan shoes, with their dew-drenched bows and uppers; and those mute evidences of toil hurt him so unreasonably that he got to his feet with an exclamation.

"You're going back to the house—now!" Positively he snapped it. "You're wet! If you need more cress I'll get it."

His eyes and her startled upgaze clashed and held. What eyes she had! A mountain-lake color, deep with sun and shadow.

"I've enough, I think; and I never take cold," she said hurriedly, reaching for the basket. He gripped the handle.

"I'm going back—I'll carry this!" he declared boldly; but she accepted his service without a trace of self-consciousness. By way of explaining himself and drawing her out, he began to talk freely, but she vouchsafed never a word as to herself in return. The cautious third of him tried to argue that she showed the becoming modesty of her position, but the irrepressible two-thirds swore that she was simply indifferent, with a serene, princess sort of indifference. But one thing was certain—she had a fascinating dimple that dented the left corner of her lip, when she was amused, and he worked to keep it in evidence with every ridiculous remark he could hit on. Infernally soon, they came to a massive gate in a high hedge, where she turned and put out her hand for the basket.

"I go this way—and thank you," she said.

The lucky hound leaped forward, and pressed through beside her. Gardiner lifted his hand to the cap he wasn't wearing, stammered something, and the quick-swinging oak shut her smile and her lake-gray eyes and her slim, pretty shabbiness from his sight. All the slow

way back to the house the third of him assailed the two-thirds bitterly and to no purpose.

A half dozen of the more energetic guests were out when he came down, groomed afresh, from his unobserved visit to his room. Little tables were set on the southeast terrace, under awning, and Carolyn Sayre, in fetchingly simple blue linen that matched her eyes, was eating wonderful raspberries that matched her lips and cream that matched her complexion. He took the chair to which her half gesture invited him, and she smiled entrancing welcome.

"I say, what corkin' cress!" boomed Ross Owen, frankly ravenous.

Cress! The cress picker's pink little fingers were every whit as pretty and graceful and well kept as those so daintily occupied with the raspberries. And where had the child learned to carry herself and to speak so beautifully?

"What are we to do to-day?" Carolyn asked a trifle abruptly; and he started from his unforgivable abstraction.

"Whatever you will," he assured her; and, in the old manner, she kept him at heel thereafter, to his watchful cousin's uneasiness.

"Rick, dear, if you've changed your mind, I won't let that lord thing come," Agatha whispered, stopping him as he went in for his tennis racket that mid-afternoon. "I'll send word to the station that we have—oh, smallpox, or something scary—"

"My dear Botherkin," he remonstrated, "haven't I told you that I'm not to be considered?"

There was impatience under his carefully light tone, and Mrs. Cadmore resented it frankly.

"You're an ungrateful beast! I meant simply to give you a chance. But one never can tell what you mean or what you want!"

The impulse surged in him to tell her that he wanted to know the name of her copper-haired maid cress picker—and what he meant. But he didn't dare. The consciousness that he didn't dare irritated him. The old snobbery was working in him, the old conventions



The intruder was staring with all his might at the young woman who sat at the table.

hampering. He went in slowly, and slumped down into a great Jacobean hall chair, thinking hard.

Presently a manservant idled in, trundling a T cart laden with china and

silver for the approaching hour, and as he spied the lounging guest, became instantly brisk and noiseless. Gardiner sat forward.

"Is Mr. Cadmore about?" he asked.

"I think in the library, sir—down this corridor, and third to your left. Think you, sir."

A raised, strident "business" voice was audible a dozen steps away from the massive library door; but Gardiner's new determination and hot self-contempt overlooked ceremony. His rap was peremptory.

"'M in!" came a yap of ominous incivility.

Marshall Cadmore, huge in his flannels, sat wisely far from and comfortably near an electric fan, with a tall, chill-headed, amber-filled, and mint-sprigged glass on a taboret at his elbow, and a typed sheet in his hand, which he lowered to look impatient inquiry at the intruder. But the intruder was staring with all his might at the young woman who sat at the table with bundles of papers, a file, and a notebook before her. She made several rapid, stenographic symbols, looked up abstractedly at the newcomer, and her cheeks grew deep pink. She was the behind-the-screen-maid-housekeeper's-room-and-cress girl.

From neck to toe she was in immaculate, tailored white, her demeanor very capable and businesslike; and after that swift pink of recognition, she inclined her head slightly, and began to sort the packet of letters.

"'M I wanted?" Mr. Cadmore inquired briskly. Gardiner found his tongue.

"No; I merely—I didn't know—Nothing that can't wait. Awf'ly sorry to—"

He backed till he bumped the door, his bewildered gaze on the girl, and conscious of Cadmore's quizzical frown.

"Tell Agatha I'll be out in time for Buckleigh," said the magnate dryly. "H'm! Go on! 'Am unalterably opposed to such dividend—'"

The sleek copper braid bent over the notebook, the small hand moved steadily. Gardiner shut the door very softly, walked a few feet, and leaned against the wall to think.

When he rejoined the picturesque group under the beeches, Carolyn Sayre's cheek was a deeper-than-usual

tint; but with some of her dearest feminine friends looking on she might not show that she resented her cavalier's ungallant delaying. She merely decided that it was too warm for tennis, after all.

Gardiner understood, but without a look of protest or apology he stretched himself on one of the lawn rugs with something very like grim sulkiness about his mouth. Carolyn had justified her existence, on this day, by her loveliness, and by having her gown changed twice, and by allowing herself to be amused; while the little stenographer girl had been out at dawn, picking cress for Carolyn's breakfast. Illogically, he was furiously angry at something.

"Ricky-ticky, you're as black as a thundercloud," Ora Sealby accused him. "And we used to think you good-tempered. Is some pretty Southern girl on your mind?"

The wicker chairs creaked as the loungers turned interestedly.

"Piffle!" He sat up, hugging his immaculate flannel knees. "Blessed if I won't tell you, though. Fact is, I'm spoiled for loafing. What right has our quarter o' creation to loaf, while there are things happening like Evelina Lucinda Johns?"

And then, with a brevity that was almost insolent, he told them of Evelina, third of eleven children, who, with eight of her brothers and sisters, was at work in his mills when he found her. She was twelve years old, with a face that belonged to forty, and a body that might have belonged to a dwarf or a centenarian; and she had tuberculosis and a bone disease, and no mind worth mentioning, but the glimmer that she did have was centered on her work. And when she was taken from that work and fed and bathed and dressed and given a blond doll, the shock was too much for her, and the glimmer went out entirely, leaving but a shadow Evelina Lucinda, that sat in the sun and fawned upon and feebly propitiated the doll, which she seemed to regard as a fleeting heavenly visitant.

When he finished, there was silence, and an uncomfortable tension as pal-

pable as a taut ribbon from chair to chair.

"You're a disagreeable *thing*!" said Ora Sealby shakily. "I don't know what we can do about your Evelinas!"

Ross Owen, sprawled at her feet, reached out a stealthy hand and patted the perky bow of her shoe comfortably. Agatha was icy, and Carolyn Sayre looked straight ahead, enigmatically composed. From the far-off drive came the husky chord of an auto siren, and the chairs gave a mighty creak of relief.

"Lord Buckleigh!" snapped Agatha vindictively; but she and all the others missed, in their flutter, the quick look that Carolyn Sayre gave the unfortunate narrator as he rose. It was a sapphire flash that Gardiner couldn't understand. But it wasn't a displeased look.

Everybody watched his meeting with Lord Buckleigh; and all admitted that though their Ricky had acquired some distressing ideas, nothing could be nicer than his manner when he chose. His lordship was big and pink and athletic, and obviously Somebody; but point for point, most women would have agreed that Gardiner outdid him. The quality of abiding boyishness was Ricky's—of which the charm is not to be defined or denied; and with the sun on his warm, brown hair, and his clean-cut, Indian-lean face, merry eyes, and shining teeth, as he stood—inch for inch as tall and as broad as m'lord—he was a powerful argument against titles.

Nevertheless, his friends felt momentarily inclined to discipline him for his recent heresy; and after a meek while in the background, he found it possible to drift away, unnoticed. He kept a wary eye back lest Marshall Cadmore should see—and inevitably suspect—his intention; and once safely out of sight he ran, uncontrollably eager, up the terrace flights and in through the deserted hall.

But the library was empty and orderly. She had disappeared again.

Why or how he found himself before that oak-planked hedge door of the morning he was unable to tell. Simply

on a chance he tried it, but it was locked, and there was no sound on the other side of the impenetrable green. The August afternoon was heavy with flower sweetness and the droning of bees and doves, with a cicada's "z" sounding the metallic high note of heat. On an impulse, he reached to the top of the barrier, with a jump, drew himself up, and dropped over. He landed in a little twisty path that quirked from sight around a mighty clump of flowering shrubs; and at the thudding crunch of his feet on the gravel, something rushed toward him, shot through the lower branches, and brought up short with a woof of recognition. It was his hound companion of the morning—and Gardiner grew suddenly conscious of his heartbeats.

"Well, old fellow," purposely he spoke loud, "isn't it permitted to investigate?"

And as he rounded the path slowly he made a desperate effort to recall the housekeeper's name, so sure was he of finding her as chaperon in this secluded spot.

Four steps, and a quaint, small garden opened its heart to him. There were old brick walls inside the hedge, with grape and rose vines and espalier peaches trained against the mellow surfaces, and in the irregular beds, old-fashioned blossoms were jumbled as only the hand of love would dare or care to mass them. There was a morsel of a gray-shingled summerhouse, with a pink rambler rose atop, and a clump of apple trees shut off a far-reaching wing of the house. It was the sort of garden she should be in, but she was not. Yet something filmy and blue, hanging over the low rail of the summerhouse, caught his eye, and he went on to it. It was a scarf that he knew, by a sense of association and fitness not to be explained, to be *her* scarf; and involuntarily his hands gathered it up, and he pressed a gauzy length to his face. It smelled of orris and ozone, clean and sweet.

On the tiny rustic table in the summerhouse was a stenographer's notebook, across which lay another book,



Accustomed as both men were to her loveliness, they were motionless before the witchery that the moonlight worked on her.

opened face down. A small silver tea tray, with one empty cup and a crumbed plate, stood beside. For no other reason than that he was obsessed with the desire to touch her belongings, he stretched across the rail and picked up the open book. It was a work on a new and very successful method of kindergarten teaching, and he wagered with himself that she was studying it with a purpose. His throat tightened with tenderness as he thought of her working with little children. Little children and the heart-o'-the-morning girl belonged together.

He bent across to replace the book, and his glance was inexplicably drawn up, under the opposite edge of the low roof, to singular gleams of white that the slanting sun picked out through the interlaced boughs of an old apple tree.

The lower white spot was a shoe, braced firmly against the trunk; the upper blotches were the white of a skirt. She was in the tree—hiding!

Very slowly he straightened. Of course, he could walk around the house and "discover" her; but suppose that she didn't want to see him? Next thought, he crimsoned with unhappiness that he, with hundreds of acres to roam in, had intruded on her one bit of out-of-doors. Impulsively, he caught up her notebook and pencil, opened it at the back, and scrawled:

I crave pardon. I confess I was hunting you, but a locked door should be respected. I want to talk to you on an important matter, and I shall come after dinner. If I may not find you here, may I have a line to tell me when and where? I'll look for it on this table.

He signed his name in full, left the book open, propped by the kindergarten work, and retraced the twisty path. Boyishly he hoped that she was peeking when he vaulted the gate. He wanted her to know that he did some things well.

Conventions no longer mattered. He went straight to his room, rang for the second man, who valeted him, was finicky about his hair behind, and was particularly shaven. He tried to grin ironically at himself, as he messed tie

after tie, but it was no use; he had to own that he wanted to look well, and that he was as nervous as a débutante, and that he had a wild hope that he might find that gate unlocked! Perhaps she kept it locked—and perhaps she had hidden—because other inquisitive male guests had found their way to her garden; and when he found himself tensing with rage over that supposition, he dropped his last pretense.

"Rick," he said solemnly to his image, "we're hard hit—and it's the real thing. Go straight—and good luck!"

Between sentimentalizing and the harassing worry as to what important thing he was to discuss with her—in case she was heavenly gracious enough to be in the garden—he was late in getting down. He was too self-engrossed to catch the expression of curious amusement on the faces of his friends, and although Agatha snubbed him tremendously, he saw no special significance in the fact. Carolyn Sayre was wonderfully beautiful in white that had an almost bridal air—for Buckleigh's subjugation, he supposed. He thought to himself that it was too modishly revealing, and that he preferred his cress girl stenographic white.

When he roused to the fact that his burgundy glass was being often replenished, he held himself to mineral water in dismay. There should be no asininity in case she was trustful enough to be in her garden. He fell into a pleasant haze of abstraction, and was prodded to his feet by Ross Owen when the women rose.

"Buck up!" that good friend buzzed, in a worried whisper. "Don't let 'em have—"

"I say, Gardiner"—Lord Buckleigh moved into the chair opposite—"what's all this about your mill philanthropy? It sounds worth while, really!"

There was nothing for it but to talk cotton and evade compliments for an endless while; and when they left the dining room, it was to find two motor-loads of guests from an adjacent country place just arriving and demanding a graphophone dance on the veranda. Gardiner, aloof and glooming rebel-

liously, felt Ross Owen nudge him again and motion him out on the terrace. They stepped from the rose lights of the drawing-room into a moonlit world of breath-taking beauty; and with a vision of the twisty path as it must be in that radiance, he began to walk fast, feverish to be on his way to that enchanted spot.

"I say, it won't do to run away again!" Ross checked him with decision by the fountain in the sunken garden. "It's deuced tryin'—I know how I'd feel to see a chap makin' off with Ora! But you got to buck up! It'll be tattled—"

Gardiner faced sharply about as he caught the drift of the mumble.

"What in thunder are you driving at?" he demanded.

Ross puckered his ingenuously worried face in a protesting frown.

"Rot it all, Ricky! Why not be square—with *me*? Don't we all know that you haven't made your pile, and can't we all see how you feel about Carolyn, and didn't you sneak off like a scared pup when Buckleigh turned up, and weren't you as nervous as my aunt's cat all through dinner? And aren't you—"

Gardiner caught the other's shoulders and shook him joyously.

"Oh, you good old dunderhead! So you think I'm eating my heart out over Carolyn? Well, you're wrong, bless you! But I can't tell you the truth, yet—not till—"

A click of hurrying heels on the terrace steps stopped him. Carolyn Sayre came around the clipped yews and stood before them.

Accustomed as both men were to her loveliness, they were motionless before the witchery that the moonlight worked on her. Her close-caught, frosty white became a web of translucent, bluetinged radiance that merged with the delicate body it defined, and was one in fairness with her bared neck and arms. Little sprays and sparkles of white fire shot from the jewels at her bosom and fingers, and the gem-crusted aigret in her hair was like a will-o'-the-wisp's elfin light. When she lifted her head,

the glimmering shine pooled in her eyes magically.

"Such a dreadful thing to do!" she said breathlessly—and at the banal utterance both men gave a little movement of disenchantment. "I want to speak with Eric," she added amazingly, "if you don't mind, Ross—"

With an embarrassed murmur, Owen started off as jerkily as if her dove's voice had been a pinprick. Gardiner felt the color come darkly to his face as she turned to him. Owen's heavy steps stumbled up the stone stair, crunched the sand, and died away. The splash of the fountain seemed very loud.

"Well, Ricky?" said Carolyn, just above a whisper, and moved close to him. She waited, a luminous, alabaster figure, the stabbing points of jewel fire revealing her hurried breathing. The heady Russian scent that she used filled his nostrils like the aroma of a potion of forgetfulness, and his jaws set rigidly against the insidious fragrance. She took another step. If he had lifted his arms, she would have been within them.

"Oh, Ricky—Ricky!" she half scolded, in laughing whisper. "Didn't you see—this afternoon—that I understood?" The invitation in her eyes was very clear.

"Understood—what?" he made his stiff lips say. His thoughts were racing. Carolyn was his for the taking—Carolyn! Yet he wanted to tear away from her and fly to the twisty path, that he might save himself, body and soul.

"Oh, you quixotic, unbelieving Ricky!" the soft whisper caressed him. "I understood that you were trying to explain why you had been so foolish. I understood that you thought there was no hope of my waiting, and I understood that you didn't dare ask me, *now*, to wait. There—am I plain enough? You are such a stupidly modest boy, Ricky-ticky! One of us had to be sensible, and one of us must be now. Tell me, will it take very long to get results?"

"Very—long—" he parroted.

A little cloudy frown dimmed her loveliness, and she looked over her shoulder nervously.

"To get the mills to paying!" There was a metallic note in her hurried undertone. "Don't go moon-mad, Ricky. I must *know!* Agatha's husband is ready to back you, isn't he? And you know, by now, that you alone can't change all the horrid inequalities in the world. If you settle to business, will it take more than a year to get the plant paying again? Tell me the truth."

The sting of silken lash in the query woke him effectually. He understood, at last, that sapphire significance of her look of the afternoon. She had construed his explanation as an apology, his abstraction as remorse; and if it didn't mean too long a waiting for returns from the work of the Evelina Lucindas, she was his. Only, Buckleigh was urgent, and she had taken this unheard-of way of making sure.

"Carolyn," he said miserably, "Carolyn—forgive me—but you *didn't* understand."

Her hand flew to her throat.

"I didn't—Eric! Eric, are you trying—Do you dare—"

He bent his head wretchedly. He could have groaned in relief when there sounded a crunching on the terrace walk, and deliberate steps began to descend to the garden. Halfway down they stopped, and there came the rasp of a match, probably for a cigarette light. Carolyn's hand shot out and closed on his wrist.

"Look at me!" she breathed. "Are you only being a fool, or—Let me see your eyes!"

And then, peering close, she saw what he would rather not have shown her, and in her passion of outraged pride he thought that she meant to strike him across the face. He would have welcomed it. But with an indescribable gasp, she flung his hand from her and gestured violently. Without a word, he turned in among the shrubbery and went noiselessly across the turf as the steps began again. As he crossed the terrace, he heard Buckleigh's voice and Carolyn's clear, soft laugh. So that explained the odd hurry and nervousness of her most alluring moment—Buckleigh was sure, to follow,

and there had to be an end of delaying.

Before the barred door in the hedge he stood an instant to gather himself. He was weak with thankfulness that he had withstood the witchery, and that he was free to try whether the gate had been unlocked or no. Almost timidly he lifted his hand at last.

It was unlocked.

CHAPTER III.

The girl sat where a broad shaft of moonlight fell across her slender, bared forearms and peacefully folded small hands. The businesslike, crisp white had been replaced by a filmy white, unadorned so far as his masculine eye could judge, that made her seem slighter and more little-girl simple than ever. How mere white frocks could convey such different things confused him.

Her face, in the shadow the summerhouse roof cast—for there was no darkness on this night of nights—seemed to his perfervid fancy as chaste and aloof as a carven saint's head seen through misty incense; and from her garden rose incense of a fitting sort—rose scent and mignonette and lavender, clove pink and bergamot and nicotiana. A trellis of moonflowers had opened, like wraith reflections of the virgin shield in the sky, and a valiant cricket company shrilled softly and incessantly. The hound lay protectingly at her feet.

After his repressed and awkward greeting, words evaded him. It had been so blessed to find her, that he wished he might sit quiet for a space and grow used to being with her, and worship her silently. But almost at once, and without embarrassment, she spoke of his note.

"Oh, yes," he said, deceptively emphatic, as if he welcomed the topic; but as he leaned forward, elbows on his knees in desperate delaying, his helpless glance about chanced on the kindergarten work, still on the table. It was reprieve, inspiration. She was interested in children—so he told her the story of Evelina Lucinda Johns.

She sat so still that he felt a chill of

uncertainty, until he saw how her hands were gripped; and at that he gave an exclamation of apology and barely checked himself from an impetuous lunge across to her.

"Oh, I shouldn't have told you—it's my beastly, thick-headed way!" he berated himself.

"No—no, you did quite right to tell me." Her soft voice was unsteady. "Because it must be that you know my—"

In mute explanation, he touched the kindergarten work, and felt a prickly wave of shame at her sigh of gladness. She leaned forward eagerly, and at the miracle of her suddenly illuminated face, he shut his hands hard.

"And you think that I might help those little things?" Her voice thrilled. "To think how they need to be taught—everything—they and the mothers and—"

She said much that was wonderfully wise and amazingly practical and divinely possible; but he was conscious only that her voice blended like music with the fragrance of the night, and that her eyes shone like those of a seeress and of child, and that the curve of her mouth led him into a maze of longing and adoration.

"But you *do* think it possible, don't you?" she ended; and, startled alert by the cessation of her voice, he caught the upward inflection, and guessed the appeal.

"I believe in *you*," he said deeply and devoutly, his hand going out to her involuntarily; and that stir of faith and feeling brought her answering hand across the table to meet his unthinking-ly; and that was what the night had waited for.

The trilling of the crickets grew to a thin, shrill insistence that might have been the note of his singing blood, and the moon and the garden muddled in a dizzying whirl; then everything stopped but his pounding heart, and he stared pallidly at the girl, who stared back, shrinking as far from him as his hold would let her.

"I can't let you go," he said, almost quietly, "until I've told you all I have

to say, for you'd never let me have the chance again. I didn't plan this. I didn't plan anything. I just wanted to see you. I want to be absolutely honest. The kindergarten notion wasn't in my head when I came here—and if I should put it through for you, it would be chiefly so that I might have you near me, and try to—to make you care for me as I care for you. I love you. I'd have said—two days ago—that such things didn't happen, but it has happened to me. I'm speaking God's truth to you, dear. It seems to me I have loved you forever, but I suppose it's only since I saw you behind the screen, yesterday. I'll give the rest of my life to proving it to you, I'll try just as you say for as long as you say. But I want to know to whom I may go for—for permission to see you. Where I may see you—er—conventionally—"

There was a relaxing of her strained body as if she started at his request. He thought he understood her surprise.

"I mean all that implies," he assured her. "I shall tell my cousin—Mrs. Cadmore—to-morrow, and have her see you. But first I had to ask you whether you—absolutely—disliked me, don't you see?"

His hold made him aware of her racing, frightened pulse, her eyes were dilated and curiously intent. He tried to smile.

"Poor little girl—I'll let you go, dear; and if it is hopeless—don't fear that I'll pester you. I'm leaving very soon. Can't you tell me whether there's a ghost of a chance? If you just don't know—tell me that."

He waited another minute, and the unison of pulse beats started a hammering in his temples.

"Say—*something*!" he besought her. "If you hate me, say so! If there's the least hint of doubt about it, say something proper and tell me to call to-morrow. Because if you just keep looking at me—like that—I shall kiss you."

She started at that, with a quick breath, and her hand twisted in his.

"No—please!" She was trembling, but not afraid. "And—let me go."

He set his teeth and cursed himself,

silently and viciously, until he was sufficiently angry to show a measure of self-control; and with a spasmodic effort, at last opened his hand and left hers free. She seemed dazed as she stared at him a second, then she rose slowly, turning to go. The hopelessness of her going hurt him to wincing, but he fought himself fiercely, and exulted that he fought so well.

The hound fumbled up awkwardly as her step forward touched him, and when she swayed, Gardiner caught her elbow and steadied her, releasing her at once. If she had gone on quickly— But against all reason, he fancied that she had let her weight rest against his support. For an instant they stayed as they were, her back to him. Then, very slowly, she looked at him over her shoulder. How she came in his arms was never clear to him; but sight had never given him an actuality so vivid as her face against his shoulder, the moonshine in her eyes before they closed as he kissed her.

When he could think coherently again, she was crumpled on the seat, arms on the rail and face hidden; and he bent over her trying to find words of contrition, when all he could think of was the satin firmness of her cheek and the silken, scented softness of her hair, and the way the universe had swung from one end of space to the other, in time to the mighty thudding of his heart, while his lips were on hers.

"I'm sorry that you're so sorry, dear—



She bobbed her head vehemently. "My name is Jane! There! Can you be romantic over that?"

est," he told her huskily, "but I—I simply *can't* be. Why, I've kissed you! How can I be sorry for that?"

She drew a long, quivering breath, and lifted her head, staring out at the moonflowers. He went on one knee beside her.

"Don't be sorry," he besought, "and don't be afraid. I'm going to leave you for now, because I've frightened you enough. But, sweetheart—you don't hate me. You may not know you don't, but I know. And I'll wait for everything else. Only I want to know your name. I want to know a name to think of."

A pause—then a quavering, unexpected little explosion: "Jane!" She

bobbed her head vehemently. "My name is *Jane*! There! Can you be romantic over that?"

He laughed contentedly and adoringly.

"Yes, I can be romantic about *Jane*. I'm glad you're cross about being *Jane*. I'm glad you're just girl—you've been so many somebodies since I saw you."

"My other name," she said distinctly, "is Cadmore."

Hailstones through the moonbeams, a zero wind cutting the August night, would have been mildly disconcerting compared to that announcement. He was frozen as he knelt, his numbed wits striving to grasp a feeble recollection that began to stir in their midst. Agatha had written him, fretting over some girl or other, but it hadn't seemed important. He had been so out of things for so long. But he began to recall a slim, floppy-hatted girl, at Agatha's wedding, and to patch together his scraps of information. By all the imps of mischief, this little thing to whom he had descended was Marshall Cadmore's daughter, and heiress to the accumulations of numberless other Cadmores!

"I remembered *you* perfectly," said the chilly voice above him; "but you didn't know me the *second time we met*, on that very day Agatha married father! Not that it's strange, of course! I'm perfectly aware that I'm queer and stubborn, and I hate society, and I *will* work, and I'm perfectly determined to go into kindergarten, but father has pacified me by letting me do things here. But I thought you had asked about me—"

He shook himself free of bewilderment and apprehension.

"I went to the library yesterday, to ask about you, but finding you there stunned me so I lost my wits. All I saw was the top of your big hat at the wedding. I will admit that there was a little time yesterday—even this morning—when I was a coward. But to-day I knew that it didn't matter who you were. I'm not a rich man, but I had enough to dare ask my cress girl to marry me; and I ask *Jane Cadmore* if

she will leave her superfluous wealth and—be my wife."

There was silence for a moment.

"Then you meant," she said, "to ask the cress girl—"

"To marry me. Yes," he finished, and lifted her hand to his lips.

She turned and looked down at him, and the night worked its spell unhindered for a space, the wraith of their first kiss palpitating between them.

"It was the moon—" she began, just audibly. But he shook his head.

"There was no moon any other time I've seen you—and this morning I came mighty near losing my senses. Can't you believe—"

"You forget," she interrupted, "that I have known all about you, though you haven't known of me. I know why you went South, and what every one expected—"

"Don't!" He rasped it out before he could temper the swift distaste of his tone, and she cringed; but all he could do was to apologize lamely—for he could not tell her of that temptation by the fountain. He turned from the memory in revulsion, and put his face down on the hand he held.

"Dear, I love you, and you alone, and there has never been anything in my life to compare with what I feel for you." His voice was slow and strong. "I don't want you as our set and sort marry, but I want you to help me to live better and work better—and die better. It's an old-fashioned sort of love I'm giving you, dearest dear. If you'll only take it, though, it will last all your life long—and beyond."

He looked up hungrily. The girl's face grew tremulous, and altered to a wistful, appealing loveliness that smote his heart to a new comprehension.

"Why—love!" he said incredulously. "Why—little girl—you don't mean that—"

But as he started up, she slipped from his closing arms and stood away from him, gathering her skirt about her, and poised for flight like a tilting moth in the silver light.

"Come here!" he ordered. "Don't

you dare—Jane, Jane, you're not going to leave me now? I'll do just as you say, I'll sit across from you, I—— But, darling, you can't leave me so soon! Why, I've waited all my life——"

"But I," she said, with a bit of a laugh that might have been a sob, "haven't waited so long as that. I have waited only—only since that day in church when in five minutes you forgot me——"

He leaped with the first breath that came to him; but like quicksilver she eluded him, was about and out, and flying along the apple-tree path.

He came back to the summerhouse with a heart pounding more than the brief pursuit could justify, and sat and put his head in his hands. She, waiting for him! His heart-o'-the-morning girl, his shabby saint of the cresses! The dog nosed against him uneasily, and he put an unsteady hand on the affectionate head.

"Lord, what I've got to make up to her!" he said humbly.

Such a wisp of a girl, to be so steadfast! Under the tingling ardor of his desire, he felt a vast peace and sureness and an awed humility.

Gradually he became aware that the dance music had sounded faintly all the while; but presently it ceased, and later there was a honk of auto horns, and then a silence that deepened and deepened. The silver fire of the great moon melted through the sky, and consumed itself in the west; the hound slept at his feet, and from the garden came tiny rustlings of small, creeping things, and the occasional cheep of a dreaming bird, and he guessed the undertone of the distant river. It grew chill, and stealthy mists crept along the twisty path, and swirled cool, filmy gauzes across his face.

He lighted one cigarette after another, and pinched them out, half consumed, while he planned absorbingly the order of their life. *Their* life! There came a space of velvet blackness when every sound was hushed; and then wonderfully the dim gray of the new day was in the sky, and the little dawn wind was alive. A bird woke—another

and another. A robin flew to the rail of the summerhouse, chirped briskly, cocked an eye at him, and flirted down to the grass for an early breakfast. The hound stretched and sat up with a mighty yawn. All the birds in the world grew suddenly clamorous.

Gardiner stood unweariedly. He felt very wide-eyed, but not in the least sleepy—that would come later, he supposed; but just now inwardly he reflected something of the cleanliness and quiet of the dawning. He swung over the rail opposite the busy robin, thrust his hands into a dripping bush, and bathed his face in dew, wiping it on his handkerchief. He meant to walk to the river where he had seen her yesterday morning, but as he turned in the twisty path to look back to the half-hidden wing where she might be sleeping, she came into sight under the trees.

The hound raced to her, but stiffened to a puzzled stop as no greeting reassured him; and the two stood looking at each other through the unreal grayness for a long instant. It was so unreal and exquisite that the man could mar it with no word, but put out his hand to her, at last, and she came on to him obediently.

Her youth made him abashed. She wore a white middy blouse over a crisp, brief white skirt, and her hair, where it was roughened from the broad, circling braid, was in babyish tendrils about her pinkly scrubbed face. She carried a tray with a silver thermos, a pot of cream, fresh berries, and a covered plate. He took it from her and put it on the table, and gathered her hands close.

"Then you knew I was here?"

"Yes, I saw your cigarette spark from the window, and guessed."

It was a little girl voice, but her eyes—gray, black-lashed, and wonderful—were the eyes of a woman; and under them lay a violet shadow of weariness. With a gentle hand under her chin he tilted up her face.

"My cigarette—then did you keep vigil, too?"

She blushed.

"I couldn't sleep. I've brought you some hot chocolate that I made myself——"

"It's like having a fairy drudge for one! You thoughtful little thing—you most beautiful! Dear, I sat all night, thinking of that last overwhelming thing you told me, the way those Round Table knights used to watch in the chapel with their shields——"

She was in his arms somehow naturally, her bright braids against his throat, his face bent to hers. They were motionless for so long that the hound leaped up on them and pawed their arms. She drew a little away. The sky brightened. It was the world of everyday once more.

"There's no moon," he informed her, "and I haven't been abed, and I haven't

had breakfast, and I call this a prize opportunity to convince you that I love you. I love you, morning girl, just as dearly as I loved the wonderful you of last night." His arms had her again, and he kissed her forehead—but suddenly held her away by her slim shoulders, and scowled his half scowl. "To think you'd sit up, night through, while I sat alone! To-day must be given over to folks and fussing, but I warn you that I shall expect to find the gate unlocked to-night——"

"Have you something important to discuss?" she twinkled, with unexpected coquetry.

"Important!" he echoed. "Why—you thief o' my heart, you little—you Jane! Do you dare deny that you owe me one whole, wasted moon?"



On a Hilltop

LET'S climb this hill slope, dear my heart,
And see the big green world spread wide;
Red barns that do their cheerful part
In tinting well this countryside;
Shorn straw that lies, a golden fleece
For wandering eyes like ours to seize,
As venturous Jason long ago
Seized that which beckoned on the tide
His eager galley to and fro.

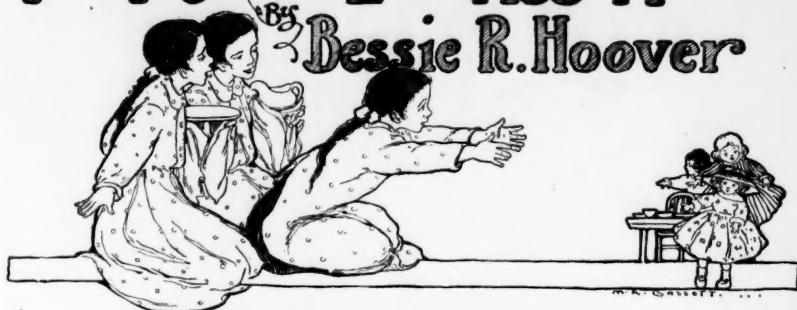
Ah, here's our goal, and here's our pay!
The path was steep—I saw the dew
Bead your soft forehead, and the way
Your breath came quick. Indeed, I knew
Watching askance, it was not light,
Your toil; but here is rest in sight.
Dry leaves from out a hickory wood
Shall make a cozy nest for you,
With their strange odor, sharp but good.

You did not even know the moon—
A wan ing one, and passing frail—
Hung in this soft blue afternoon?
That farther slopes marched on?—for pale,
Low mists were on our plain, behind.
Sweet, here are broad, new worlds to find.
The widened sky, the vein that thrills,
The fresher leap of pulse and mind,
Are bright rewards of climbing hills!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.

The Toys the Little Aggs Missed

By Bessie R. Hoover



Author of "Pa Flickinger's Folks," "Opal," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY M. R. BASSETT

I WISH I had a really, truly doll!" sighed little Adelaide Agg, as she ate her supper of bread and milk, sitting at the oilcloth-covered kitchen table between her sisters, Cynthia and Melvina.

"You're too big to play with doll babies," asserted her father, Jonas Agg, a thin, stooped, little man, whose greatest interest in life seemed to be to work and save money. Adelaide was eight years old.

Everything in the Agg home was unlovely, from the threadbare rag carpets to the faded paper that defaced the walls. And the three little Agg girls lived colorless lives prescribed by rigid economy. None of them had ever owned a toy; but they played, when free from their monotonous tasks about the house and farm, with dolls made from milk stools and bits of crockery.

Adelaide was the youngest; Melvina, aged ten, had the most freckles; and Cynthia, two years older, was so authoritative that her sisters called her "bossy." They were all undersized, with dark hair and eyes and thin faces. But though the little Aggs lived frugal lives in their meager home, they were not unaware that other children in the great outside world played with real

toys, having caught wonderful glimpses of store windows on their rare trips to town.

"There's wild flowers over in Old Lady Marle's woods," volunteered Adelaide.

"But she shouldn't pick any—should she, pa?" asked Cynthia.

"In Marle's woods? No, she shouldn't," vetoed their father shortly.

"I don't suppose Abby Marle 'ud care, though," spoke up Mrs. Agg mildly, a patient, tired-looking woman. "It's been so many years since the quarrel."

"We can't take nothing from Abby Marle," declared her husband sharply.

"But I wouldn't care so much for flowers—if I could just have a doll," persisted Adelaide.

"Dress up your milk stool like you always have," suggested her mother.

"Twouldn't be anything but an old milk stool then," returned Adelaide. "I could buy a doll—with my own money," she added, while Cynthia and Melvina smiled derisively at such a remark.

"It's better to put your money in the bank," instructed her father. "How much you got now?"

"Thirteen dollars," answered Adelaide, a trifle resentfully.



*"Cause she's littlest, Adelaide thinks she's got to have everything she sees—but we haven't got time,"
Cynthia explained.*

"And all earned by picking berries last year! Just keep saving, and when you're old enough to get married, you'll have enough money for your setting out—think of that! You don't want to spend your money for dolls. And now we've all et supper, you girls start for the cows. And—remember—nobody sets foot on Abby Marle's land; we don't want to be beholden to her," he warned the children.

"But if I saw a wild flower a-peeking through the fence—couldn't I pick it then?" Adelaide asked her mother.

"Best not," advised Emily Agg.

The Agg farmhouse was a small upright and ell, once white, now weathered to an unlovely no-color. Nothing had been done for years to improve the appearance of this home; for Jonas Agg seemed as impervious to beauty as the flinty stones that littered his dooryard. No trees had been set about the house, though on the south side a cherry tree had sprung from a discarded pit, but it

was scarcely more than a ragged bush, adding to the unkempt appearance of the place.

It was early spring, and the sun was setting, round and red, back of the wide, lonely fields and the distant gray woods, as Adelaide, and Melvina, and Cynthia started down the long lane to the pasture. The trees were still bare, though thickened buds gave the branches greater prominence. And the only note of vivid color, except the sun, was the rich green grass already springing up in the meadows and the narrow lane.

The day had been warm, and they were barefooted, which was a mild sort of dissipation for the little Aggs—and saved-shoe leather.

When they reached the pasture, the cows were not at the gate.

"Let's go over by Old Lady Marle's woods—just to see if there's any flowers," proposed Adelaide.

"But it won't do you no good if there

is," reminded Melvina. "You know what pa said."

"A flower might be growing through the fence," hoped Adelaide.

"The cows 'ud a-gobbled it long before this," practical Cynthia assured her.

"But play they hadn't," urged Adelaide. "And suppose somebody 'ud be there in the woods picking flowers, and would say, 'Here's a whole handful for any little girl that wants 'em—'"

"Things don't happen that way," returned Cynthia.

But as they neared the woods, they saw on the other side of the fence, where the wild flowers made a tapestry of pleasing and delicate colors, a pleasant-faced old woman with a green sunbonnet pushed back on her thick white hair. She was gathering roots in a basket, and, seeing the three little girls, she said kindly: "Coming for flowers?"

"No, ma'am," returned Cynthia politely; "we're just after our cows."

Then she and Melvina looked at each other in a frightened way, for they knew that the woman was Abby Marle, the nurse, and started on; but Adelaide lingered stubbornly beside the fence, gazing wistfully at the white and red trilliums, the green and purple jacks-in-the-pulpit, and the pink anemones.

"Come and pick some flowers," invited the old woman.

"Oh, let's! Please—please!" begged Adelaide of her sisters, but they drew her with them.

"'Cause she's littlest, Adelaide thinks she's got to have everything she sees—but we haven't got time," Cynthia explained over her shoulder as they hurried away.

"I don't see what makes Adelaide so crazy for flowers this year," Cynthia told Melvina after they had found the cows, and were driving them up the long lane.

"I wouldn't care so awful much for flowers—if I could just have a real doll," acknowledged Adelaide, "like the one I saw the day pa bought us all new shoes."

"Oh, quit harping on a doll. You know pa never lets us buy any playthings. You should put your money in the bank," advised sensible Cynthia, "for your setting out, or, if you don't get married, it keeps 'cumulating—to use when you're old—pa says."

But such far-fetched preparations for living fell on Adelaide's ears unheeded; she was little, and she wanted to play like other children, and she had never owned a real toy.

"Ma might buy me a doll," ventured Adelaide.

"Oh, ma!" exclaimed wise Cynthia, with quiet scorn. "When did ma ever have a cent of money to spend? Adelaide, what makes you so cranky today?"

"Oh, I wish somebody 'ud leave a real doll right here in this lane!" cried Adelaide.

"But it wouldn't be yours," reminded Melvina.

Adelaide's face clouded over for a moment, then she said eagerly: "But play it would; play there was a little note saying, 'This doll is for the little girl that finds it.' And suppose the doll was in a little carriage with cream wheels and a blue top?"

"With a real hat on," added Melvina, coming under the spell of her sister's "supposing."

"And play there was a wreath of tiny daisies on the hat," put in Cynthia, interested in spite of herself.

"And suppose there was a little red table and real doll dishes," continued Adelaide, naming the toys she had longed for. "And suppose some good, kind person was going to leave the doll and the rest of the playthings in the corner of the rail fence behind the next spice bush—for us!" she swiftly decided. "Oh, let's play they left 'em there this afternoon!"

"The shadows ahead do look a queer shape," admitted Melvina, half believing it herself.

"Oh, maybe somebody did leave 'em!" exclaimed Adelaide excitedly, her dark eyes bright with hope. "'Cause I said suppose somebody gave me flowers—and a lady would uv—if you'd let

her. Let's play somebody left the doll and things. And let's run and see!"

Breathlessly, the three little Aggs ran down the lane, panting and laughing, and the peaceful old cows broke into an awkward gait and shambled clumsily ahead of them. And the more Adelaide "supposed," the more certain she grew that she would find the doll and the other toys; and her faith was so great that she unconsciously inspired her sisters.

But when Adelaide and Melvina and Cynthia got to the fence corner, they found only a ragged spice bush, rising leafless and brown above the new, green grass.

"Oh, dear!" grieved Adelaide forlornly, and began to cry with gentle, helpless sobs. And suddenly it seemed cold and dreary in the great, dim fields, for the sun had set, and the cows were rods ahead of them.

"Adelaide, what ails you?" demanded Cynthia ungraciously.

"I'm cold, and my feet hurts me," returned Adelaide, trying to give a reasonable excuse for her great disappointment.

"Ma told you you'd better wear your shoes and stockings toward night," recalled Cynthia, and then said over her little sister's head, "I guess I'd better slap her."

"Maybe Adelaide's sick," charitably allowed Melvina.

"We might make a chair and carry her," proposed Cynthia.

"Then pa'll think she's sick, and I'll have to milk her cow," dissented freckled Melvina.

"Oh, laws! I dunno whether to slap her—or carry her home. Shut up, Adelaide!" ordered her eldest sister.

"I'll milk her cow—if I have to," offered Melvina. "I don't believe she'd cry like this for nothing."

And Melvina joined her hands with Cynthia's in what they called a chair.

"Hop up, Adelaide. Maybe she's coming down with the measles," suggested Cynthia hopefully.

"Suppose we all have 'em?" added Melvina, with relish, while Adelaide only whimpered miserably, as the little

sisters trudged on with their light burden, happy at the very thought of such distinction.

"Probably it's the measles that's ailing Adelaide," announced Cynthia importantly, leading the sick child to her mother, after the cows had been put in the barn.

But it was not measles. And Adelaide was put to bed that very afternoon, and lay ill with a fever for weeks.

"It's queer how Adelaide always keeps harping on dolls, when she's never had one," noticed her mother.

"She's talking now about a really, truly doll," said Cynthia.

"She's so sick that there's no sense to what she says," allowed Jonas Agg drearly.

"Do you suppose Adelaide 'u'd like a doll?" ventured his wife.

"Laws, no!" he replied, astonished. "Did you make the broth as the doctor said?"

"Yes; but she don't care much for it."

And Cynthia and Melvina, looking mutely at each other, dared not tell their parents how much their little sister had wanted a doll.

"I can't help but think that it was breathing the air of the cow stable that made her sick, for she's never been very strong," worried Emily Agg.

"But her sisters began to milk when they was little like her—and it never hurt them none—I never thought—" began their father.

"Anyway, she's no better. I wish Abby Marle could see her—she's nursed over thirty years," added Mrs. Agg timidly, but her husband was silent.

Yet, even before his wife spoke, Jonas Agg, himself, had thought of Abby Marle, who lived on the next farm, feeling intuitively that she would know what to do for Adelaide. But the memory of the quarrel years before with her fiery little husband, Orlando Marle, arose before him.

For Jonas Agg, according to an old, inaccurate survey, had held a strip of

Orlando Marle's land, though when it was proved that the new survey was right, he had promptly given in; but he had cherished the grudge.

Emily Agg seldom questioned her husband's ways, but now that Adelaide was sick, fear urged her to speak.

"I know Abby'd come if we 'u'd ask her," she finally said.

I feel sure she'd know what to do about Adelaide."

"I can't ask her," refused Jonas harshly, who felt that he was kept from it by barriers of his own making.

"But Abby Marle knows what to do with children—it's a gift," insisted Emily Agg.

"I'm going out to plant potatoes now.



"Maybe she's coming down with the measles," suggested Cynthia hopefully.

"We've never helped Abby Marle since her husband died—and we ain't got no right now to ask her to help us," argued Jonas Agg.

"But she's never asked anything of us," reminded his wife, "and she's always spoke pleasant to me when she's met me to other folkses; and we all went to school together. Besides, she wasn't to blame about the fence. And

If Adelaide gets worse, call me." And her husband dismissed the subject of the old nurse in this way.

But as he went up and down the long rows in the field that lay between his home and Abby Marle's cottage, the idea that she could help Adelaide clung persistently to him. But his had been the bitter experience of withholding help because of an old grudge; and now



"It's a doll she needs," Abby Marle assured them.

even when Adelaide was so ill, he hesitated to ask aid of Abby Marle.

As he worked, he came nearer and nearer to her cottage, but he often looked apprehensively back toward his own forlorn home where the sick child lay.

It was nearly noon when Cynthia came running across the field, her dark hair flying in tags about her pale face.

"Ma says Adelaide's worse—come quick!" she called, in a frightened voice, then started homeward over the uneven ground.

Jonas Agg dropped his pail of potatoes, and stood for a moment, irresolute, then he turned toward his neighbor's cottage. And Old Lady Marle, as she was called, hearing a knock at her open kitchen door, glanced up from her ironing to see him standing before her.

"Abby, our little Adelaide's awful sick. Will you come over and see if anything more can be done for her?" he asked simply.

"Yes, Jonas," she answered. "I've felt kinder drawn to go over for some time." And she immediately put on her green sunbonnet, and started down the road, while Jonas hurried across the fields.

"I'm afraid it's too late," Mrs. Agg said, as she took the old nurse to the bedside of the sick child.

"I ought to have come sooner," allowed her neighbor gently. Then, pushing her green sunbonnet far back on her white hair, she listened to Adelaide's faint speech.

"The doctor's done all he can, but I guess it ain't medicine she needs," said Jonas Agg. "She can't sleep."

"Emily, bring me Adelaide's doll," Abby Marle softly ordered the child's mother.

"Why—she ain't got none," returned Emily Agg.

"Then bring Melvina's—or Cynthia's. I'll do just as well. But be quick about it—it's a doll she wants," explained Abby Marle.

Then Jonas Agg's wife spoke helplessly: "Our girls ain't got no dolls—there's never been one in the house."

"Sometimes we dress up our milk stools for dolls," spoke up Cynthia, who, with Melvina, was standing near the bed, the tears running down their freckled cheeks.

Abby Marle left the room abruptly, saying: "I'll be back after a bit," and started home across the fields. From an old chest in one of the tiny rooms under the eaves of her cottage, she took an old-fashioned, yellow-haired doll, dressed in blue silk; then she hurriedly returned.

Jonas Agg and his family, waiting by the bedside of the sick child, made room for Abby Marle, who put the old doll gently in Adelaide's thin arms. "It's a doll she needs," she assured them, and the frail little girl, who was already slipping away into unconsciousness, feeling the real doll actually in her arms at last, sighed contentedly, and went to sleep.

"When Adelaide gets stronger," observed Old Lady Marle, in a matter-of-fact voice that brought Jonas Agg and his wife back from the thought of death by its merciful commonplace, "she'll be asking the name of the doll. Tell her it's Dorcas Green."

The neighbors' children heard of Dorcas Green, and other playthings drifted to the bedside of Adelaide, who slept with the doll in her arms every night, and looked complacently at her during the days of her convalescence.

And one warm day, when the sun was calling the buds into blossom, the little Aggs sat on a strip of rag carpet under the self-planted cherry tree; and they were not playing "suppose," but were deep in the satisfying occupation of "keeping house" with a small red table set with doll dishes, a battered tin stove, and Dorcas Green, whose wonderful wardrobe Old Lady Marle had unearthed for Adelaide.

"A-playing with doll babies, huh?" noticed Jonas Agg kindly, on his way to the barn, and stopped awkwardly for a moment beside the children. He wanted to say more, but he was not an articulate soul. And though the toys were secondhand, and the playhouse of Adelaide and her sisters was but a bit of old carpet spread over the bumpy ground, they were twice as happy for their father's sanction. And the cherry tree was white with bloom, and the make-believe of childhood gilded the simple toys, and the little Aggs were as contented as a king's son might have been with costly gifts.



Vision

OUR visions vanish. Time, the strong and swift,
Sweeps off some splendor with each flying year;
Illusion fades, and barren facts appear;
The zenith hardens and the vapors lift.
No more in golden galleys shall we drift,
Nor ride through sounding lists with spur and spear.
Ah, Wisdom, where hast borne our fancies dear?
Restore our glories, and have back thy gift!

Yea, take all things, so thou wilt leave me youth—
Deep woodland shadows where the sunbeams sift,
With opalescent dreams that flame and shift,
To fold me from the clutch of gray, bleak fear—
For daily I behold more icy clear
Against the sky the naked peaks of Truth.

VICTOR STARBUCK.



Author of "Helga," "Found—a Grandmother," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

MARY and young Dooley performed the introduction as a joke, just to see what the high priestess of the women's locker room would say when she found that the jovial Irishman—as yet devoid of a title, and considering himself lucky to have even a job—bore the same honored name as her own—O'Harahan.

It was early, scarcely half past five o'clock. The mists still lay thick upon the golf links, and hung heavily white along the shrubbery that skirted the road where the course crossed over to the fourth hole. The April sun shone wanly through the mist, and the breeze, blowing stiffly over the park from the lake, was fresh and cold; but in spite of it a number of men were already out on the course, yielding to the thrill of spring in the air and to the lure of the young green grass beneath a pliant brassy.

On the broad, graveled approach to the first teeing ground lay a patch of pale sunlight. Mary, shivering under an old gray sweater, stepped from her lunch counter out into its warmth, for it was damp under the broad roof of the "golf shelter" veranda, and a man was swishing water over the cement floor with an old broom. Suddenly, however, Dooley caught her by the arm, and then she saw that the man with the pail was none other than O'Harahan himself.

"Good morning to you 'both! It's a

fine pair you make," said he, solemnly bowing over his pail.

"The same to you and your bucket, Mr. O'Harahan!" retorted Mary, but turned as red as Dooley, while O'Harahan scrutinized them both slyly from under his slouch hat.

Even at thirty, with the marks of a heedless life discernible in his face and nonchalant figure, O'Harahan was handsome, even attractive. His eyes, though not clear enough, were very blue and full of fun; his mouth, perhaps a trifle weak, was nevertheless far from sensuous, and could still smile frankly and winningly; and it was plain from the complacent, almost innocent, expression on his still-boyish face that his conscience was of the variety that troubled him not at all, but, utterly irresponsible, left him through all his misdeeds as undisturbed as a child.

"You're a bit too tall for him, Miss Mary, and a deal too handsome for the likes of young Dooley here; but you'll do nicely at that, I'm thinking. Saints save us! What have we here?"

Dooley and the girl wheeled sharply at the exclamation, and saw the Widow O'Harahan. She stood at the corner of the building that led around to the women's locker room, and was watching them oddly. Her fine figure she held erect with a serene dignity, her matronly shoulders thrown well back so that the starched tucks of her gingham dress rounded in smooth, unrumpled

curves to her ample waist, her apron, partially rolled over her arms, hiding only in part the blue gingham stripes that fell trimly over well-proportioned hips. Her hair was fine and dark, and a trifle curly about her face; her complexion was wholesomely ruddy; and her eyes, of true Irish blue, gave the impression of measuring every one they looked upon while baffling at the same time any investigation into her own thoughts. Few people trifled with the Widow O'Harahan.

Dooley, recovering himself, performed his introduction blithely:

"Good morning, Mrs. O'Harahan. May I have the honor of making you acquainted with a gentleman who bears the same honored name as yourself? This is Mr. O'Harahan."

The widow bowed graciously, but without speaking; and O'Harahan, after a mumbled acknowledgment of the introduction, shifted from one foot to the other, and then grew dumb. Neither could Mary or Dooley think of anything further to say, and so the widow let the three of them stand awk-

ward before her a moment while she surveyed them all calmly. Finally she spoke, exactly as if she were pleasantly trying to relieve the embarrassment of three bashful children:

"Tis true enough, as you say, 'Mr. Dooley, that O'Harahan is a fine name to be bearing. I mind well in the old country how that the O'Harahans was a family most respected, with the five grand, splendid sons as they had. A credit they was to their mother surely, and a proud day for a lass when she



The widow had been seen standing at the corner of the building looking out over the links.



Her fine figure she held erect with a serene dignity.

went marrying one of the O'Harahans. 'Twas the youngest lad, Tim, I married myself, and, if I do say it, the handsomest of them all, and the one most eager to get on in the world. It was for that we was after coming to America—him and I—when we was just married—the two mere children of us to be coming so young to a new, strange country!"

There was a brief silence. Then O'Harahan straightened himself with a queer, almost defiant, smile.

"And what happened to your husband in the new, strange country, Mrs. O'Harahan? Or maybe it's bold I am in asking?"

The widow looked at him.

"He died," she said evenly. Then she repeated it: "He died."



Dooley and the girl wheeled sharply at the exclamation, and saw the Widow O'Haranan.

And with that she turned and walked back into the locker room, leaving Mary and Dooley, their cheeks crimson, to study the floor in silence, and O'Haranan to gaze at the spot where she had stood with the stare of a baby whose big blue eyes notice for the first time a ray of sunlight.

That was all. And yet it seemed to be the beginning of strange things. One

was, as Dooley reported to Mary, that at noon when O'Haranan came up to the shelter for his lunch pail he walked clear around the building along the walk that led to the women's locker room, which was obviously out of his way.

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Another was, as Mary reported to Dooley, that once in the afternoon the widow had been seen standing at the

corner of the building looking out over the links where, across the road, two men—and one of them O'Harahan—were pushing the heavy iron roller over the putting green at the fourth hole.

The strangest was that Mary and Dooley, as they started home together, saw the widow hurrying across the park toward her car line, and also saw O'Harahan come out of the shelter, catch sight of her, overtake her, and, after a moment's hesitation on the widow's part, walk along by her side until they were lost to sight around a clump of pale-green and lavender lilac bushes.

The next morning gossip began to spread like an epidemic among all the park employees who reported at the golf shelter or who knew the Widow O'Harahan. And most people did know her, for there were few of the men who at one time or another had not found the widow's keen gaze discomfiting; and all the women were well aware whose was the victory when they crossed swords with her.

As for the new man, Pat recited with gusto to each new inquirer just how O'Harahan had spent the night in the park, somewhat the worse for wear; how, awakening without breakfast or money, he had applied at the shelter for a job; and how that same morning upon which he met the widow he had been "taken on," merely for trial, and at that by a somewhat dubious boss.

"And sure," concluded Pat each time, with a knowing wag of his red head, "there's no denying the fact that he's hard hit with the widow. 'Twas myself saw him slip her an apple for her lunch—and Lord only knows where he got it!—and then the widow herself a-thanking him for it. And that's the truth!"

It was generally admitted to be extremely odd. Every one had looked for the widow to turn him down completely—a number of other men might have testified that she was in excellent practice for this feat—but instead she actually continued to receive attentions from him; coolly, to be sure—it was evident that she found attentions no novelty—but at the same time with such

a gracious spirit and so sweet a smile that a heart less timid than the sprightly O'Harahan's might have been imbued with courage to continue the courtship.

As for O'Harahan—the boss, much to his own astonishment, found him a prize. He was steady; he was an indomitable worker; he was cheerful, rain or shine, and popular with the men. Moreover, far from being a fool, he was actually clever, had ideas, and gradually grew indispensable in a score of ways. Remembering his rather indeterminate origin, however—the slightly shaky way in which he had applied for work at five o'clock in the morning—the experienced boss awaited his next downfall resignedly, and, with natural caution, held back promotions that otherwise would have been rapid.

The downfall, strange to say, did not come; and as the weeks went by and O'Harahan grew more and more valuable he was from time to time shifted steadily upward until he at last donned the khaki uniform of the park employees, and became a regular adjunct of the golf shelter. The boss was a married man, but it was notwithstanding true that the fact that the widow looked upon the man in question, if not with actual favor, then at least with tolerance was largely instrumental in forming the opinions of the portly executive—though this he would naturally have denied.

Spring slipped away into summer, and times grew busy about the park golf links. Every morning the sun when it rose found a line of golf bags laid upon the gravel, their owners impatiently awaiting their turns to "drive off." When the official "starter" arrived at seven o'clock he found a small mob clamoring for the blue tickets; by noon there were always several hundred "ahead"; and Sunday meant at the shelter a mad rush from dawn to dark.

The yellow spring dandelions on the course had grown old and white-headed like the golf balls that lost themselves maddeningly in among the little globes of white down, and the patches of clover whitened overnight to tempt the runaways to elude the eyes of the



O'Harahan was marshaling into line the widow and her three children.

watchful caddies—even of the widow's young "Tim," the best caddy on the links. Then the hot midsummer sun burned the short grass brown and dry, and O'Harahan set all his hoses and sprinklers running day and night to save the sod, so that the course spouted with the dripping fountains, and "casual water" became the bane of the perspiring golfers.

Mary, frantically "slinging hash," to say nothing of ice-cold buttermilk, behind the lunch counter to exasperated players who were nearly "up," and who feared to lose their places, worked mechanically through the heat, and during work hours caught but scant glimpses of Dooley to discuss with him the ever-absorbing case of O'Harahan versus O'Harahan.

Yet gossip raged, notwithstanding the midsummer flurry, and Mary and Dooley, whose "case" had hitherto been the favored topic of discussion, were almost forgotten in the feverish curiosity that this new courtship aroused.

It seemed to Mary that about this time the widow grew more severe in her attitude toward O'Harahan, also a trifle more indifferent. If she was ready when he appeared at the door of the locker room in the late afternoon to walk home with her, well and good. If not, she refused point-blank to let him wait for her. Sometimes she smiled on him; often she ignored him completely, and would stand in consultation with the boss, utterly oblivious of the blue eyes that adored her openly from the other side of the desk, where O'Harahan stood humbly awaiting his own appointment. Was she trying to test him? Mary wondered. And, being of an interested turn of mind, Miss Mary attempted to find out.

"You'll be losing your suitor, Mrs. O'Harahan," she said to her coyly one day, after she had heard the widow turn down an offer of O'Harahan's assistance with some heavy lifting in the locker room. "'Tis not every man will stand for that high and mightiness."



"If he should be dying, Kate!"

The Widow O'Harahan studied Mary a moment, her hand closing and shutting slowly over the bunch of keys she held. Then she said:

"It's a worse fate many a girl has than losing a man."

"And what is that?" asked Mary, still in search of information.

"Sometimes 'tis getting them," replied the widow enigmatically. "And sometimes 'tis losing your heart entirely instead of losing the man. But there's still a better way, I'm thinking, than getting a man at all."

"And what's that?" asked Mary again.

"Why, that's to let him be getting you. It's a sorry day for a girl when she goes chasing them."

The widow's eyes were baffling, as usual. Was it possible, queried Mary silently, that Mrs. O'Harahan, instead

of imparting any desired information, was giving her young friend a "tip" on the case of Dooley versus Mary?

But Mary thought the conversation over carefully.

"Did you ever think," she asked young Dooley that evening at the nickel show, "that the two of them was acting funny when you was introducing them?"

"Funny?" Dooley looked mystified. "Funny? Why?"

"Oh, nothing, then," she said. But when they came out of the theater she nudged him sharply, and pointed over toward the other door. O'Harahan, a string of tickets in his hand, was marshaling into line the widow and her three children—nine-year-old Tim and two little girls younger.

"By golly!" exclaimed Dooley. "He seems to be courting the whole family!"

It was evident that any significance Mary might have attached to the incident had slipped past Dooley unnoticed. But Mary's suspicions were aroused, and into the many events that the following weeks brought about she read a deeper meaning than Dooley or any other of the park employees. With the gradual unfolding of the drama into the secret of which she had penetrated there came to the girl a fuller understanding of the Widow O'Harahan, which gave rise slowly to an admiration for the woman's splendid reserve and fortitude.

So the hot summer dragged away, and the air grew crisp with early September's hint of autumn. The equinoctial storms came and blew down the leaves into soggy heaps which rotted under the damp bushes and caused irritation to the peevish unfortunates who "sliced" into the shrubbery. A mellow Indian summer followed, and the links grew crowded again, until, with October's nipping frosts, people began to carry home their clubs for the winter and turn in their brass locker checks.

It was on a Saturday afternoon, and Timmy was caddying for a foursome of college fellows who were playing their final round for the season. They had been out a couple of hours, and were playing the seventeenth hole when the accident happened.

The first that the widow knew of it was when O'Harahan appeared at the door of the locker room carrying the lad in a crumpled little heap in his arms. A huge, swollen lump, dangerously near the temple, told the story of the ball that, destined for a straight two-hundred-yard drive, had hit Timmy instead; and the whiteness of O'Harahan's face, as well as the tragic fear in his blue eyes, proved to Mary all she had hitherto only guessed.

"If he should be dying, Kate!" Mary heard him say to the widow, in an agonized whisper. And, with her face as white as his, she answered: "Whisht now! For the love of Heaven, calm yourself, man, and be running for a doctor."

It was not serious. They worked

over him for two hours—the widow, the doctor, and O'Harahan—and the strain was hard. But when at last Tim raised his heavy eyelids and smiled up into his mother's face, and when the doctor had gone and left the three, as they supposed, alone in the darkening locker room, it was the Widow O'Harahan who gave way. The climax of the long strain of the summer had utterly broken down her pent-up reserve.

Timmy, over in the corner, on the improvised couch, was resting comfortably as he waited for the ambulance that the doctor was to send for him; and it happened that Mary, the last one of the girls to leave, was still in the washroom and heard every word through the swinging door.

It was the sound of the widow's sobs that first caught her ear, and then O'Harahan's voice saying:

"Kate, Kate, it's on our two knees we should be, thanking God, and not crying surely. If the lad had died now! But it's living he is, and—oh, Kate, will you be letting me home now with yourself and the children?"

The widow had stopped crying. Mary, red with the shame of eavesdropping, and desperate to escape, could imagine just how she threw back her head and pierced the man with her eyes as she answered, in a low voice:

"First answer me this, Tim O'Harahan. It's no promises I'm wanting, but the truth from yourself and your whole soul. Is it sure of yourself you are now for playing the man, and a steady one, too? For I've no mind to be repeating the last year you was with me, nor the long, hard, terrible five years I've lived since, indeed."

"You've my word this day, Kate, that it's a man you've made of me this summer, and I'll not be repeating the past. It's a brute I've been to you, and no mistake, and myself never realizing it at all till the morning I looked on your face in the springtime, and yourself speaking so grand and noble of the O'Haraigans as we was—and then telling me I was dead to my face!"

"Yes—with my own heart breaking

fairly at the change since the day I married you. And then knowing for the first time 'twas all my fault."

"Yours, is it? Surely it's a lie you're telling, talking such talk! It's yourself has been the grand, noble woman, Kate, and myself not worthy to make love to my own wife, though it's loving you more I am this day than the morning I brought you, a bride, from the old country."

"Twas my fault, I'm telling you," she repeated. "For you had my whole heart entirely—I was that in love with you, Tim. And I would be always after sparing you when you should have been bearing the troubles with me to make you strong. Aye, 'twas myself sending you out with the boys of an evening to be enjoying yourself, while I worked till morning often with the babies, doing the worst thing for you, as I see a sight too clearly now. And then myself abracing up and smiling for fear you shouldn't keep on loving me! 'Twas young things we was then."

"'Tis on myself the shame goes entirely, Kate O'Harahan, and now let's forget it all. For since the day I saw you again, when you told me I might be after courting you again and proving myself a man the like of the Tim O'Harahan you married—since that day

I've done that same, as you well know. And myself all summer wondering will you ever care for me again like you did for that same Tim O'Harahan, Kate. And it's that I'm asking you now."

"Tim O'Harahan, even on that day when we met again in the springtime you had my heart entirely, though 'twas near breaking with the pain. For it's loving you I will be always till the day I die."

The twilight had fallen, and the locker room was very still. Mary turned to one of the windows in the washroom, and buried her face in her arms on the brick ledge.

And when in about a week the startling news came out that the widow and O'Harahan were married, Mary for once refused to gossip about it.

"You don't seem very much surprised," complained Dooley, in a disappointed tone—for it was he who had told her. "But, then, neither was I. I knew he'd get her."

The secret trembled on the girl's lips, but she forced it back, and said simply, but with a new, almost proud, light in her eyes:

"And I'm thinking 'twas a grand, noble woman he got when he got the Widow O'Harahan."



Incense—Incensed

AN assistant rector of one of the most ritualistic and high-church Episcopalian churches in Chicago one day discovered in a crowd of street urchins a boy with a wonderful soprano voice. He engaged the lad as a choir singer, although the child's language and general demeanor were both rough and tough.

Several times the divine gentleman regretted his action, but the boy's voice was so marvelous that he was retained in the choir. The last straw came on Easter morning, when a gorgeous processional was going in and out of the aisles of the church. The boy had been assigned to carry the smoking incense, which added greatly to the beauty of the scene.

A few moments after the procession had started, the assistant rector saw to his horror that the incense was not in the hands of the boy. Accordingly, he marched down the aisle and intoned:

"Where did you leave the incense pot?"

The answer came back, sung in that beautiful soprano and in the rhythm of the hymn:

"It's in the vestry—infernal hot."



ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND FREDERICK

MAURICE, my only brother, whom I have always lived with, says that this story should be called "The Orphan Child." But my mind goes back to the beginning of things more logically than his does, and it was the veranda that came first. Of course, the Orphan Child introduced me to Mr. Tom Leslie, and both of them together saved my life. But I never would have known either of them if Maurice and I hadn't fallen in love with the veranda of old Mr. Hickup's deserted house, and gone to live near Aylmer Park.

Aylmer Park is really nice. There is a country club, and a sort of settlement of cottages, something like Tuxedo, though not quite; and it is only an hour from town. But we could never have afforded to live there if we hadn't been prowling round one spring, and discovered old Mr. Hickup's place. There were twenty acres of it, big-treed and avenueed, and all the rest; but the Hickup estate could not sell it in lots to the Aylmer Park people for cottages because there was something wrong with the title, and nobody but us ever seemed to have thought that it could be rented.

Of course, there were a thousand things wrong with the house. It was old, and it was cold; more drafts than hot air came up the radiators the April we moved in. The kitchen was a big, rickety shed that wabbled when you walked in it because it was built out on posts over the stable yard, so naturally

you had to cook in the pantry off the dining room; and no one really likes to hear gravy being made while they are at soup. And most of the other rooms weren't much.

Only the drawing-room was really satisfactory. It had a hand-work ceiling all as true to line as the day old Mr. Hickup finished his country house and made a park round it, without the faintest idea that the Aylmer Park people were ever going to be ready to give thousands for scraps of land not a mile off, and have cottages and a select community. And it had two windows—a bay high up from the ground on the one side, and a gorgeous, twenty-foot French window that opened flat on the front veranda.

But it was for the veranda that we really took the house.

It was seventy feet long, and twenty wide; which might not have meant much if it had not been for the beautiful proportions of the white rail and roof pillars, and the thick gold-green of the wild grapevine that made a house of it in summer. The vine was in blossom the day Maurice and I first saw it, and I can smell that wave of heavenly scent yet. We looked at the blossoms, and the veranda—and I got hold of the Hickup estate people, and made them let us the house for almost nothing because of the leaks and the bad title, though it was not till the next April that we moved in.

Of course the whole of the Aylmer

Park people flew at us behind our backs, and said that we were selfish sneaks, and should have told some one who could really use a country house that the place could be rented; and that we were living altogether beyond our means, because it was nonsense for us to keep three horses. To our faces—at least Maurice's, for I never saw much of them—they said that we were simply children, if Maurice *was* twenty-seven, and too sweet and irresponsible. I didn't care what they said. I was too busy arranging the veranda.

It was truly a dream of color and light when I finished with it. Maurice had two good rugs that Aunt Mary gave him when she thought he was going to marry Miss Gallatin. They were all worn to that dull, silky pink that queer reds can wear to, and I laid both of them on the veranda floor, with an ivory matting aisle between them for muddy feet and the front door. I put tubs of pink hydrangea all along the rail against the grapevine, and good, pinky cloths on the two big tables, and heaps of pink-and-cream cushions on the really comfortable wicker chairs I'd painted ivory like the matting.

It was good color, and there was a lot of vibration to it; especially when I lay in one of the dull-crimson hammocks I bought for a dollar because the man in the shop thought they were faded, and looked along the wonderful, shining gold-green of the grapevine that covered me and the pinkness in from the pure gold sun, to the blue-green and gray-green and brown-green of the pine trees that made the end of the vista—because the grapevine stopped when the veranda turned the corner of the house.

It was real color, and there was a lot of vibration in it, as I said, and the chairs were comfortable. And yet—somehow, when Maurice was away, as he is two weeks out of three, I did not sit very much on the veranda. It was all very well in the daytime, if I had a really good book. But in the evening, with everything perfectly peaceful, and the whippoorwills beginning to call the stars out for company, I didn't feel truly cheerful there.

Of course, I needn't have stayed alone; I could have gone over to the country club. But I didn't. And in my honest soul I knew that it was because, when I came home, there would be no way to get into the house except by scuttling across the veranda. I might have gone up the back steps and through what-wasn't-the-kitchen, or some of the country-club men would have come home with me, but I never thought of either thing. I stayed at home because I knew, inside of me, that I didn't want to cross a perfectly ordinary veranda alone in the honey-colored starlight all full of peaceful whippoorwills.

The first two evenings that Maurice was away, I came in and sat in the drawing-room. All the rest I went upstairs. And I had no other earthly reason, and I knew I hadn't, except that when I sat in the drawing-room the light from the twenty-foot French window streamed out on the pink rugs and white pillars of my really lovely veranda, and made a black shadow, low down on the nearest pillar, that I hadn't seemed to notice when I first sat down.

It was a queer shadow, that looked something like a square, flat head—the kind you see on some animals in a menagerie. I knew that it was really the shadow of the square arm of one of the veranda chairs, because I moved the big lamp and it went away; but all the same I went upstairs. I wasn't really comfortable, even when I got there. I had to sit down, and wonder if I were getting nerves. I thought that I must be, because I'm not usually afraid of anything but mosquitoes; they poison me till I swell up and have a temperature. And downstairs, in the drawing-room, looking out on a plain veranda, I knew that I had been afraid of something like—well, like ghosts.

I was ashamed to own it, even to myself. And naturally I never said a word to the servants. There are only two—Findon, who takes care of our two proper horses and the Orphan Child—I will get to the Orphan Child presently, but things have to come one at a time—and Mrs. Findon, who does



"It was a queer shadow that looked something like a square, flat head—the kind you see on some animals in a menagerie. I knew that it was really the shadow of the square arm of one of the veranda chairs, because I moved the big lamp and it went away."

everything else. They are English, and priceless, and I didn't want them to be worried by knowing that I was afraid to go on the veranda. It was bad enough to know it myself. When Maurice came home, I never said a word to him either. I was ashamed to; and, besides, I forgot about it. He took two days' holiday, and we did a lot of riding, which brings me to the Orphan Child.

He was a horse—the most awful-looking, miserable horse I ever laid eyes on—that I picked up that April, the week after we moved into the house. I literally did, because he was lying down in the slushy snow by our gate, too sick and exhausted to move. Maurice hates animals to suffer. He wanted to shoot the poor thing straight out of his misery. But I had a feeling that I couldn't have it so; he looked so dreadfully as if he had never had anything nice since he was born, and being shot can't be really compensating.

Findon and I got him on his feet, and up to the stable. To this day I don't know how we did it, for he was nothing but bones and sores; but he drank the warm stuff we gave him, and I thought he'd get well. But it was not till nearly July that he began to look like anything, and we realized that he was really a big, up-standing, spotty-gray horse, kind as silk in the stable, and willing to go till he dropped.

We'd found out about him by that time. He'd been in a circus at Bowesville, which is really our nearest town, but he used to go nearly crazy with fear of the lions, so they sold him to a liveryman, who sold him to a contractor. The contractor worked him till he couldn't work; took off his shoes to save two dollars; and turned him out in the woods past our place to die; and I suppose instinct made him struggle to our gate. The S. P. C. A. man from Bowesville prosecuted the contractor, and let us have the Orphan Child for twenty dollars; though I must say that it was before he even looked like getting well, and long before I ever dreamed that I was not going to enjoy my veranda, or that if it hadn't been for

the Orphan Child I wouldn't have stayed alive to enjoy much else.

I was pretty proud the first day I rode him. He looked a handful, though he really wasn't, and I had on a white duck habit and a loose white coat, and my good panama. If Maurice said I fancied myself, I did. But I did *not* see Mr. Tom Leslie when I passed the gate of his new place down the road. I didn't even know he lived, then. Though afterward, when I knew that was the first time that Mr. Leslie ever saw *me*, I was glad that I'd looked in the drawing-room glass after I got home.

I'm not always pretty, but that day I was a heavenly surprise to myself. I suppose it was only because I had such a clear color in my cheeks, and my hair was all over my forehead in little rings, which made my eyes look dark, though they're only gray. I sat down in the drawing-room, after that really triumphant first appearance of the Orphan Child, and had some tea, though it was pretty close on dinner. Maurice sat down outside on the veranda, and I suppose he took in the pinks and greens, and what he doesn't know is vibration of color, for presently he called out to me that it was pretty good work, and about the nicest-looking veranda he'd ever seen.

I wasn't paying much attention. I'd forgotten about thinking it was haunted. I had one eye on a book, and the other on my own reflection in the corner glass. I really had never looked so pretty before, and I wanted to get the good of it. But Maurice called out again:

"Do you remember that skunk we ran into one day by the quarry—and how we went over to the Potters' afterward, and they wouldn't even let us into the house?"

I mumbled "yes," out of the book. Then I came alive. I said: "Why in the world are you talking about skunks?"

He yawned before he answered: "I don't know. I just thought of them."

Presently he came in. He said it was chilly on the veranda. He shut the

window and lit the lamps, and the logs in the drawing-room fireplace, and we sat there after dinner. Maurice was playing patience, and I was reading again, when I suddenly remembered the veranda. The lamps were shining out on it through the wide window, just like they had the last night I'd sat there alone; and I don't know what put it into my head, but the only earthly thing I could think of was that there wasn't a sign of a shadow on the nearest white pillar, and that *I hadn't moved that chair with the square, sticking-out arms!*

I had a kind of a cold feeling that I knew was just silly. Maurice was sitting there, looking pretty big and solid, and it was ridiculous to have nerves because *I wasn't seeing a scary shadow*. I got the sort of brave you get when you know there's really nothing that can hurt you. I opened the window and went out on the veranda—and tried some experiments on that square-armed chair. And I wasn't really comfortable when I'd tried them. I couldn't make its shadow come on the veranda pillar at all, unless I put it bang out where I could see it—and then the shadow its arm made was just the shadow of a chair arm. It did not look one bit like a low, square head, and not the most nervous girl on earth could have thought so.

I came in. Maurice said he was cold, if it was July, and he shut the window and the old-fashioned, solid-wood shutters. I wasn't really sorry. Of course, I *said* to myself that the shadow had been plain imagination; but I knew inside me all the time that it was just ghosts, and that I was haunted. I very nearly said so to Maurice. But he had to go to Pittsburgh on business the next morning, and I knew that he would be deadly worried if he thought I was going to be nervous while he was away; so I decided to hold my tongue. I went up to bed.

It was after Maurice went to Pittsburgh that the Orphan Child introduced me to Mr. Tom Leslie. I know it sounds absurd about a horse, but he certainly did behave in the most queer

way that afternoon, after he'd sailed down our drive and out of the gate with me. There is only one house on the road between ours and the country club—the big white one with the lovely gardens and the iron gates, where Maurice said I'd seen Mr. Leslie the day before—only I hadn't. I didn't know he lived there, or even his name, till Maurice said it. He didn't belong to the country club till after he knew me. Though I must say he never saw much of me there after he did belong, because it was easier to come straight over to our house; but that comes in later.

This day, before I even knew him by sight, I was riding down the club road on the Orphan Child, both of us enjoying ourselves; when—personally—I stopped doing it. The Orphan Child had given the most awful shy I ever sat through, pivoted round on just one of his hind legs, and was off up the avenue of the house I didn't know was Mr. Leslie's, as if he'd gone out of his mind. Only once in my life did I ever feel a horse run like that; and then it was the Orphan Child again, and I would have made him go twice as fast if I'd been able. But that first time I nearly died of shame.

I couldn't even keep him on the drive. He just headed like mad for Mr. Leslie's stable—over the rosebushes and the herbaceous borders as if they were water jumps. And halfway up the drive I couldn't make him stay on I passed the best-looking man I ever saw in my life, sitting on a perfectly motionless and well-behaved horse, and just *looking* at the Orphan Child and me. I knew that he must own the garden I'd chopped up, and I felt furious, because any one could have seen that I was perfectly helpless on the Orphan Child, till he stopped of his own accord in the stable yard.

I got down; and he was so wet that he was nearer black than gray, and trembling all over; I could truly see his poor heart shaking him back and forward on his legs. I forgot all about the man who had sat and looked at me. I got some water, and was sponging out the Orphan Child's mouth, because I



"He just headed like mad for Mr. Leslie's stable—over the rosebushes and the herbaceous borders as if they were water jumps."

really thought he was going to faint, when I heard a horse behind me, and the man I'd seen staring at us rode into the yard and got off.

He said his name was Leslie, and that he knew who I was because he knew Maurice, and had seen me riding with him the day before. But he didn't seem any too pleased about the way the Orphan Child had been behaving, and implied something about his being too crazy for a girl to ride. I was angry. I never apologized about the garden, though I'd meant to. I said that the Orphan Child was nothing in the world but frightened—I didn't know what of—and that he was always a very gentlemanly, collected horse. And as he'd nearly stopped trembling, I would have scrambled up on him by myself, only Mr. Leslie had his hand out for my foot before I knew it. He didn't go on being silly about the Orphan Child. He said that I probably knew my own horse best, but that he'd like to ride home with me and see if he bolted again.

He didn't mention the garden, so we rode out of the stable yard beside each other, and it was then that I saw how really good looking he was. The general effect of him was brown, with a kind of warm look in his face under the brownness, and his eyes were streaked brown and hazel. He had a really lovely nose, and was most beautifully dressed in country riding clothes. I was looking at the brown boot on my side of his horse and listening to something he was saying, when we came to his gate—and the Orphan Child stopped—dead.

Then he did the queerest thing I ever saw a horse do. He looked up the road and down the road. Then he lowered himself down, crouching flat, and snuffed hard at the road between the gateposts, like a dog on a scent. He snuffed like that three times. Then he blew the air out of his nose, shook himself till my teeth rattled sitting on him—and walked out of the gate he'd bolted into, and up the road toward home, quiet as a lamb.

"I told you he was just frightened,

and he's decided he was an idiot." I just gasped it, because I was so pleased to be right.

But all Mr. Leslie said was: "Well, I'm hanged!"

He looked up the road and down the road, and so did I; and neither of us saw a thing any horse could have been afraid of, so we gave it up. But he stayed at our stable door, talking, after I got home, and that was how things began with Mr. Leslie and me.

He came over three evenings running after that, though Maurice was still in Pittsburgh. I don't know if he wondered why I was sitting in the little writing room behind the drawing-room; if he did, he didn't say anything. I did. I said I liked it when I was alone, because it was small. What I didn't say was that its two windows were high off the ground, and didn't look out on the veranda, or on shadows that weren't the furniture. But he was more good looking than ever in a dinner jacket, and I knew that he was really nice. He talked about things I was interested in, and the evenings stopped being a nightmare. By the third one I'd forgotten that I even had a veranda, much more how silly I'd been about it.

But the fourth evening Mr. Leslie didn't come. I went upstairs early to my room. But it was so cool there by the open window after a blazing day that I only pulled the hairpins out of one side of my hair and sat reading, instead of going to bed. And in the very middle of a word I remembered the veranda I'd forgotten for nearly four days.

I had to. Somebody was walking along the whole length of it, with a kind of heavy, slinging step that hadn't any sound to it—if you can reconcile the two things. And both our dogs went straight under my bed. The side of my hair that had the hairpins out tumbled down my back, but I didn't notice. I had a horrid idea that I was afraid. Of course, the front door had the latch down, but I was practically alone in the house, because the Findons sleep out in the long ell. I was wondering if I

should go and wake them, and not too sure I even dared to run through the back hall to do it, when both things went straight out of my head.

The Orphan Child screamed—out in the stable!

Any one who has ever heard a horse scream will understand that you don't sit still and listen to it. I knew there was something dreadful happening to the Orphan Child, and that I had to go to him. I tore downstairs. But I'd remembered I couldn't reach the electric light in the stable, and on the way I grabbed up a patent lantern of Maurice's that lights with an electric spark. I suppose I could have waked Findon; but, as I said, I'd forgotten him. I took the stairs on the jump, with one hand on the banisters; but even then I didn't run out by the veranda. I went through what-wasn't-the-kitchen, down the back steps anyhow, and into the stable by the woodshed door that we never bother about locking. But I stopped to shoot the bolt of it behind me.

Then I went into the dark stable. I didn't light my lantern, because I wanted the horses to hear my voice first. There are three loose boxes in the stable, and one stall, but the Orphan Child's is the only box with a window in it; and he generally spends his spare time looking out of it. It has bars outside, but they're only wood. But to-night he wasn't looking out. He had his back to the window, and he was kicking for all he was worth; pretty low down, and like a horse does when he's really vicious. And as he kicked, he yelled.

The two proper horses had got excited, and they were kicking, too. I never was in such a noise in my life. How Findon slept through it I don't know, but he did. There was just me, and the horses, and the dark stable. I didn't know whether there was any one inside it or not. But it came to me that there was bright moonlight outside, and that I ought to have seen a square of it through the Orphan Child's window and I didn't! It was black. It was then I remembered those awful steps

I'd heard on the veranda, and I turned cold.

I managed to speak to the horses. The two proper ones stopped kicking the minute they knew I was there; but the Orphan Child seemed to go stark crazy. I was afraid he'd cut his legs to pieces when I heard the window glass go, and I knew I couldn't tie up arteries without Findon. I opened the door of his box, and let him straight out on the stable floor.

Then I saved both our lives, though I didn't know it. I jumped out from behind the loose-box door, when I'd let the Orphan scrabble by, and snapped my thumb on Maurice's lantern, right straight in front of the window I'd been trying to see out of and couldn't. It is a really good lantern. It flares out in a rush of white light that cuts your eyes, and that you could no more face, close to, than you could face a search-light.

For five seconds even I could not see one thing, though of course I was behind the lantern. Then I saw the window frame—splintery from the Orphan Child's heels. Then the bars outside came just as plain as in daylight, though the Orphan Child seemed to have broken one of them—and through them I could see the grassplot below the end of the veranda, and the lilac bushes half-greeny between the lantern and the moon.

I put the lantern on the window sill, and felt for something to lean against. Of course, it was silly, but I was excited, and the only thing in my brain was that that window had been blocked by something black when I came in, and that there wasn't anybody or anything there! I didn't see why the Orphan Child should have ghosts, and be haunted, as well as I—but I supposed he was. I felt horrid—all limp and weak. I could hardly move even when I remembered that the Orphan Child might be bleeding to death, and that I'd have to get Findon. I sort of shambled out of the box, and called the Orphan. But he seemed weak, too. He just stood and didn't come, and when I got close to him he dropped his head on my



"He and Maurice roared when they heard how my charity dog had turned on me."

arm. He was all wet and shivery. I was getting some straw to wipe him down with when somebody called from outside.

It's not the least use trying to write what Mr. Leslie's voice sounded like to me. It wasn't loud, and it was just cheerful and everyday; but I felt as if it were an angel's. I put the door latch up and let him in. He took a sort of casual glance round, and I knew that second that I really liked him. For he never asked, "Is anything wrong?" or silly things like that, when he could *see* the Orphan Child dripping, and me looking a perfect fright with all the hairpins out of one side of my hair. He said:

"That's a great light you have there! You do spoil that crazy Orphan Child. I suppose you heard him start a kicking match, and came straight out!"

I just nodded. I didn't feel like trying to explain. And it was not till ages after that I remembered that Mr. Leslie hadn't tried to explain how he happened to be around our place in the middle of the night, either. I couldn't talk much, anyway. After a while I said: "Something frightened him."

Mr. Leslie laughed; but it was an understanding laugh, and as nice as ever it could be. I felt as if I'd known him for years, and he'd always been just there to look after me. He pushed out a box for me to sit on while he dried the Orphan Child. And he certainly was understanding, for he put him in the stall, where he couldn't possibly see out, when he was done. Then he went and looked out of the window of the empty box. The glass was gone, and one of the bars the Orphan Child had kicked away—I forgot to mention that he wasn't cut to speak of—but that was all. There wasn't a sign of any trouble, nor even a mark on the grass outside, and Mr. Leslie sincerely thought that the Orphan Child had just had hysterics. He said:

"Look here—I'll fix up for now, so that no one can get in the stable; but honestly, there isn't one thing around outside! If any one had been trying to steal the Orphan, I would have seen

them as I ran up the drive. Or your dogs would have smelled them; they're outside, scratching round in the shrubbery."

I said yes. I knew that both the dogs were upstairs under my bed. But I didn't want Mr. Leslie to think *all* our animals were crazy. I waited till he'd nailed up the loose-box window, and locked both stable doors; and he waited at the back steps till I'd gone into the house. And that was all there was to that.

I didn't have any more trouble with the stable. Findon and I found an old iron shutter, and hinged it outside the Orphan Child's window instead of the smashed bars. All I said about it was that he would be safer in a kicking fit that way than if he had glass to break. I didn't want Findon to guess I'd been frightened, or he would have gone straight up in the air about taking care of me—he's that kind. I was up in the air myself, for it's an awful thing to be haunted, and not be able to tell any one; and what made it worse was that I knew the dogs knew it without any telling.

I have only just mentioned the dogs before. One is light, and the other dark brown. The light one is half bloodhound and half fox terrier. The little boy we got him from for a dollar said: "Father thought it was no use waiting for him to grow up into a bloodhound, because he wasn't doing it, so he cut his tail and gave him a chance to be a terrier." And you really would think that he was a very smooth Irish terrier, if you didn't know about him. The dark one Maurice rescued somewhere in town. He said that he was half spaniel and half Chinese laundry, but he thought he was a good dog. And he is; but he is too deadly clever for a dog. I knew the very day he found out I was seeing ghosts.

But if you think that this is going to be a story about dogs' devotion, it isn't! Those dogs didn't care one bit whether the ghosts got me or not; all they saw about was that no ghosts got *them*. When we first brought them to the country, they were out hunting things

all day long, and most nights. But after they found out about me and the veranda ghosts, they wouldn't go out at all. I might whistle, or I might roar; they never left the house. I could get them down the back steps from what-wasn't-the-kitchen, but if I hauled them anywhere else their backs bristled up and their stumps of tails disappeared, and they *crawled*, till I let them go; and then all I could see was a light and a dark-brown streak getting into the house again—by the back way.

No dog ever went near the front. And afterward I realized that the Findons never did, either, or they might not have calmly kept on cleaning horses and keeping house for me. But I wasn't considering the Findons then; it was the dogs that worried me. When they began to behave like that, I really thought I'd have to tell Maurice that there was something wrong about our veranda, and that, lovely as the house was, I'd have to leave it. But I didn't; for something perfectly unexpected brought me to my senses about the house, and the dogs, too, before I could be such a fool.

It was nothing in the world but that one morning I looked out of my window, and saw a bit of a big yellow dog sticking out between some bushes in the garden. All I could see of him was a patch of very thin, slinky ribs, and a corner of hind leg that looked something like a starved Bordeaux bulldog, only he was too big for that. But of course the minute I saw even that much of him, I knew that it wasn't any ghosts that were worrying our dogs or me, but just some poor old stray mongrel, if he was a very big one. Our dogs are pretty little, and I knew that he must have bounced out on them, and taken their dinners away, and scared them till they didn't dare leave the house.

And I realized at once that it was his shadow I'd seen on the veranda, where the poor thing must have come to look for food; and that it had been just him, too, standing up on his hind legs against the loose-box window, that had made a fool of the Orphan Child and

me. My heart went up, flying, till it settled in the nice, comfortable place it seemed to have dropped out of lately, for nobody could have any nerves about a stray dog.

I felt dreadfully sorry for him, starving round like that. Every day I used to throw the biggest bones I could find out over the corner of the veranda for him, just where Maurice had sat when he thought of skunks. I had heaps of bones, because it was quite simple to have a joint every day. Mrs. Findon was dreadfully sad about the waste, but I couldn't care. I needed the cold meat to throw out. I never saw the dog come for it, but it was always gone when I took out the next lot. So I stopped worrying about him. He seemed to be the kind you could never make friends with, and all I could do for him was to fill him up. And I stopped worrying about our dogs being cowards. But about a week after, I stopped giving that strange dog bones, too.

I generally know when animals are hanging around, and I knew he usually kept track of me about bone time. But one morning, instead of going along the veranda to feed him, I went round the corner of the house, with most of a leg of mutton in one hand, and a brand-new dog whip in the other. Naturally, the last thing I'd ever think of using a dog whip on is dogs; but a man gave this one to Maurice for a present, and I thought that it was my duty to learn to crack it. So I'd been practicing before I came out, and I'd forgotten to put that dog whip down—unless it was Providence that made me have it in my hand.

For—just for two minutes—I was so scared that the blood wouldn't run in my legs. Yet it really wasn't anything tangible that scared me. I'd thrown the mutton bone into some bushes, and I don't know if it hit that strange dog or not; or if he'd only been hiding there and watching me. But, anyhow, I had the most awful, sudden horror down my legs, like I said; just as if Death was staring straight at me and I couldn't run away.



"I didn't even wonder what it was. All I knew was that it hadn't crouched to spring. It hadn't crouched!"

I could feel that strange dog's eyes glaring at me from somewhere that I couldn't see him; and I could feel, too, that they were *holding* me! I didn't even know that I thought about my dog whip, so I wasn't really brave, but only automatic. I cracked that whip like a pistol shot, and I said: "Hut, hut!" quick and sharp, with my tongue slapping flat on the roof of my mouth, like you hear them at a circus. And if my blood hadn't been too curdled already to let my knees slacken, I'd have dropped into the grass. For out of those bushes, three times nearer me than I'd ever dreamed of, that yellow dog snarled. It doesn't sound much, but it was just savage, sudden death at my elbow. My heart turned straight over, and some one I didn't know was I began to pray: "Holy Virgin, come quick! Oh, Blessed Virgin, *run!*"

To the day of my death I will believe that the Holy Mother did run, for the next thing I knew I heard that dog rushing away. When he was quite gone, I went into the house. I knew that he was only a dog, and had only snarled at me, but all the same I felt pale. Mr. Leslie came in that evening, and he and Maurice roared when they heard how my charity dog had turned on me.

But I don't know that they truly thought it was so funny, for when I came back after I'd been out of the room for something, I heard Maurice say: "Have it shot, of course! I'll tell Findon. She hasn't any fear, and she might get—"

But he saw me and stopped. Mr. Leslie didn't say anything. But he was watching the door for me when I came, and there was something so queer and protecting about his eyes that I sat and looked at some crochet lace I was making for the rest of the evening.

But Maurice didn't tell Findon, for he got a letter at breakfast that turned him all colors, and went off by the ten train. I didn't want a poor dog shot, though I knew it was the kindest thing we could do for him, so I didn't say anything to Findon, either. But, somehow, though I wasn't exactly afraid of

him, I simply could not take him out any more bones. I never even went to what Maurice calls the skunked end of the veranda. The dog didn't come round, either. But Mr. Leslie came a lot; sometimes when I knew, and oftener when I did not; though I didn't find that out till one evening when I was leaning out of my window, and saw him when he didn't see me. He had a rifle under one arm, and he was gazing down on the baked grass of our lawn. I took the opera glass, and his face was such a funny mixture of worry, and relief, and disappointment that I called out to him to come in. When he did, I couldn't help laughing. He was making such a fuss about a yellow dog and some bones.

I said: "He's miles away from here by now. I haven't seen a sign of him for a week. And you needn't have dropped your rifle behind that lilac bush. I know you've been prowling round for days, trying to shoot a poor dog who never did you any harm."

For a very good-looking person, with a really beautiful nose, Mr. Leslie went rather a funny red. He opened his mouth as if he were going to say something sharp and contradictory, and then he didn't. I didn't say what was in my own head, either. I wasn't going to encourage being taken care of by a man I'd only known for three weeks, by letting out that, whether that strange dog was gone or not, I didn't feel as if I wanted to sit out in the veranda; or that our dogs were still spending most of their time under my bed.

Besides, Mr. Leslie was so funny and restrained and restless that I didn't feel as if he and I were getting

on as well as usual, and every girl will know what that meant. We weren't anything like as understanding of each other as we were the night the Orphan Child kicked his window out, and he seemed quite cross that Maurice was still away. He said he wanted to telegraph to him on important business, and looked perfectly blank and furious when I said that I didn't know his address.

It wasn't exactly true. I was pretty sure that he'd gone over to the Gallatins, at Newport, for I knew that Miss Gallatin had written to him at last; only I didn't want to say so, for I knew Maurice would be cross. Mr. Leslie was cross. He began to say something about "the devil," and "slack," but he stopped straight up — and I never dreamed he was thinking of Maurice. Then he looked at me with a queer sort of look, in a queer sort of silence; and I felt as if I'd like to see Maurice myself, instead of having him over at that Gallatin girl's. I wanted to cry that very minute; and you can't — before a man who looks at you like Mr. Leslie without saying anything, while you remember you have only known him for three weeks. I said that if he was going would he post a letter to Aunt Mary? And, of course, after that, he went.

But when he was gone I did cry, because I knew I was frightfully happy, and I was glad that Mr. Leslie was taking care of me. I forgot all about the lovely veranda I didn't ever want to sit in, and went straight up to bed because I was so happy that I was shaky. Mrs. Findon brought me sandwiches and a glass of Burgundy instead of dinner, and I went to sleep like a lamb,



which I wouldn't have done if I'd known that Mr. Leslie and his rifle were still stalking all round our place, and that he never went home till morning.

If he was looking for tracks to tell him where that dog had gone to, he didn't see a thing, for we'd had no rain all summer, and the ground was iron. He went home after sunrise, thinking he'd made a fool of himself. But, of course, I had no idea of that. I was wondering if he would be over in the afternoon; and, just because I wanted him to come, I had Findon saddle the Orphan Child, and went for a ride by myself. It was so blazing hot that I walked him a lot, so I didn't bring him home anything like tired; but all the same we'd been a pretty good round.

It was sunset when we got back, and I was cross; for I knew that Mr. Leslie must have come and gone long ago, and that I had been nothing but a little fool to go out and avoid him. I rode the Orphan Child round to the stable door, and I was crosser. For the door was locked. And I remembered I'd told Findon I might dine at the country club, and not to expect me till I came home. So, of course, he and his wife had gone out. I'd never really meant to go to the country club, and all I wanted to do now was to put the Orphan Child to bed, and then crawl into the house myself, and cry.

I rode round to the front door, and got off the Orphan Child—he stands forever if you put the reins over the leaping horn—and ran up the front steps and across the veranda, to go into the house and get the stable key off the nail in the kitchen. And it just shows how much good presentiments are! That was the only time I didn't have the shudders at being on the veranda by myself; and I didn't have *one*.

I'd been cross enough before. But it was nothing to the awful crossness that went through me when I found the front door was locked—for, of course, the Findons would never have gone out and left it any other way—and I couldn't get in to get the stable key! I saw I'd just *have* to go to the country

club. I turned round, blazing, to go down the steps again; and I stopped halfway—facing the skunked end of the veranda.

All I knew was that I could not pray. It was there! The awful, awful Thing that I'd never thought of, except to make a fool of myself by imagining that it was a big, lost dog. I didn't even wonder what it was. It was dirty yellow. Its square head, that I'd seen the shadow of on the veranda pillar, was lowered right down till it was looking at me out of the top of its eyes dreadfully. Its long, snaky tail was banging against the sticking-out ribs I'd tried to fatten with legs of mutton. I couldn't even think. There didn't seem to be anything in the world but that Thing and Me. All I knew was that it hadn't crouched to spring. It hadn't crouched!

I don't believe I really remembered the Orphan Child. I only seemed to know suddenly that he was at the foot of the veranda steps, still and stiff like I was; that I was down there, and on his back; and still the Thing above us hadn't crouched. What saved us was that it sprang without crouching, and cannoned on the veranda post. Not even the Orphan Child's jump as I hit the saddle could have saved us except for that, and I knew it even then. Though all that I thought I was thinking about was that I mustn't worry about my stirrup, but just sit glued down and let the Orphan Child run.

He ran. My hat went, and I didn't know it; the water poured out of my eyes, and I had to make myself go on breathing. I felt as if he were flat to the ground as we tore down the drive, till I screwed my head round and saw something that was flatter. That Thing I'd thought was a dog was just pouring along the ground after us, a yellow streak on the road—and *gaining*!

I got right back in the saddle as I've seen boys do, and it must have eased the Orphan Child, though I'm not heavy for him. He gave one almighty bound, and tore on, with that Thing scouring after us down the country-club road. Any other time we would have met everybody's motors, and the Hethering-

ton twins in the perambulator; but there was not one soul all along the road. It must have been the Orphan Child who turned in at Mr. Leslie's gate, just because he'd done it before, the day I didn't know what frightened him. It certainly wasn't me. All I knew was that I screamed: "Tom! Tom!" at the top of my voice, as the Orphan Child and I tore up his drive. I'd never called him Tom; I didn't know I'd ever thought of him as Tom; but I did then. And all of a sudden I saw him.

He was standing at the turn of the drive, about as cool and quiet as if he were receiving at a bridge party. And he never even looked at me. He was looking behind me, at the road; along the barrel of his rifle that was jammed into his shoulder. But he must have thought I was going to stop the Orphan Child—though Heaven knows I never could have—for his voice cut at me: "Go on! Go on!"

I went, because the Orphan Child was going on, anyway. We thundered by the back of Tom Leslie's house, and right into his stable yard, where the Orphan Child tried to bring up, and couldn't, and smashed down flat on his off side, just as two rifle shots brought Mr. Leslie's men tearing out of the stable. I came off on my feet, but I wasn't thinking of myself. I was sick when I saw the Orphan Child struggling on the ground as if he'd gone mad, and the men trying to keep him from killing himself; but I wasn't thinking of that, either.

After those rifle shots had come a horrible, screaming roar—and I thought that Thing must have got Mr. Leslie! I turned to go and see, and the next thing—though I don't know how I ever got there—I was crying and crying all over Tom Leslie's coat, that smelled something like smoke and something like Russian leather, only cleaner, and he had me off my feet in his arms like a child. While the men who weren't wrestling with the Orphan Child were standing in front of us, goggling at a dead lioness.

For it was nothing in the world but

a lioness, that I'd thought was a stray Bordeaux bulldog. She was stone-dead when I got there. Tom had really only put in a second shot not to take chances. And the very evening that I'd seen him wandering round our place with his rifle, when he was so cross that Maurice was still away, he'd found out enough about her to be able to guess the rest, and tell me—when I'd stopped crying over him, and was beginning again over my guardian angel, Orphan Child, that only for me would have been shot before he ever had a chance to get well and save me—what he hadn't dared tell me with Maurice away and me alone in the house. He said it had seemed simpler just to hold his tongue, and stay around all the time with his rifle. He'd been there all the afternoon while I was out. And he'd only gone home to get something to eat, and was going back when I met him.

That lioness had been round our place for weeks. She had been in the same circus as the Orphan Child, and was the kind they think is tame, and have act in chariot races, till one day she jumped clear of the chariot she sat in, and landed fair on the Orphan Child and the girl who was doing an act on him with a revolver and blank cartridges. That girl was braver than I ever could have thought of being. She fired her blank cartridge straight into the lioness' face; and she fell off, and the circus men got her while she was half blinded. But the Orphan Child was ruined for the circus. He just fainted with fear the second he smelled lion, and couldn't do his acts or anything—which explains how he got sold and came down to us through the contractor.

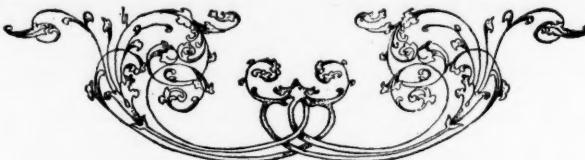
Why the lioness only haunted me and the Orphan Child is explained just as easily, too. After she broke out that time, she seemed to have a spite against horses, and she'd go crazy with rage if she saw a woman. The circus people were going to shoot her. But the morning they went to do it, her cage was all smashed, and she was gone. They looked for her till they were worn out, but not a soul in the whole countryside

ever laid eyes on that lioness till I did—when I thought she was a big, lost dog. And by that time the circus had given her up and moved away. The only really queer thing about the whole business was that she should have brought up at the same house as the Orphan Child. But she did, and that was all there was to it.

Only we were fools not to know about her. For she lived right under the end of the veranda where Maurice had thought of skunks—which was no wonder. All that were left of my mutton bones were in there, and goodness knows what else besides, when we got through the hole in the cement foundation where she used to go out and in.

When Maurice married Miss Gallatin they never had a thought about sitting on that veranda—but I had. Even after I was Mrs. Tom Leslie I didn't care about it. Maurice's wife hadn't it as pretty as I used to; and besides—Well, I had been too intimate with that veranda!

There are only two more things I really have to say. First, the Chinese laundry really was too clever to be a dog, for when Tom took me home that night, he was galloping a high, cheerful gallop round the lawn he hadn't set foot on for days. And, second, I had to leave the Orphan Child at Tom's till I was married. He wouldn't even go in at his own old gate.



The House in Happiness Square

THERE'S a house that stands in Happiness Square,
On a little hill just above,
And it's built of brick that is solid and strong,
Joined fast by the mortar of love.
Wee windows smile with their glad, bright eyes,
That glow with the warmth within,
And the walls are white as God's daylight,
That knows not sorrow or sin.

But it isn't a mansion great or grand,
Though its treasure is wealth untold,
For if walls are bare, white love lives there
Which nobody gets for gold.
And kings may dwell in their marble halls
And palaces rich and rare,
But there isn't a *home* in the whole wide world
Like the house in Happiness Square!

Oh, Happiness Square isn't hard to find,
If only you know the way;
And the little house waits, with open gates,
To welcome you there—to-day.
And to those who *love*, and to those who *know*,
They may find its counterpart,
In the tender clasp of a good man's arms,
Or the warmth of a woman's heart!

HAZEL PHILLIPS HANSHEW.

The Best-Dressed Woman

By Hildegarde Lavender

Author of "The Communal Commissariat,"
"Chaperons or Knowledge," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL



THE passion for perfection, considered abstractly, is doubtless an ennobling attribute 'o' poor humankind. Even when it degenerates, as it so often does, into an ambition for supremacy, it still performs its miracles. It crowned the Acropolis with the Parthenon, it reared St. Peter's, it erected wonderful edifices throughout medieval Europe for the edification and instruction of modern, tourist America, it fought great battles, painted great pictures, composed wonderful music; it also grew "bumper" crops of wheat, it established schools and colleges, it built the locomotive. Most of what we have, much of what we are, is due to that "spark which disturbs our clod," as Browning calls it.

The spark has disturbed the female clod, also. The results of that disturbance have not been quite so spectacular as the results of that which has presumably agitated the male clod, but they have been no less pervasive and far-reaching. Probably the flame has burned with all the more intensity because of the restrictions laid upon feminine ambition. Did Michelangelo, pondering the great pile that is his glorious monument, put a greater passion for perfection into his dream than Dame Abigail into the sanding of her floor in her New England farmhouse? Did Benvenuto Cellini, working patiently with his jewels and metals, dedicate himself more earnestly to the task of outdistancing all competitors in the goldsmith's art than Mistress Priscilla, decorating a towering cake with com-



To houses in which the only maid is engaged in last-minute work at the dinner table, she comes wearing carriage shoes that require a maid's attention.

plex icings, dedicated herself to the task of making every other cake in the village look mean and amateurish by comparison?

The determination, the energy, the idealism, that have gone into waxing ancient highboys and lowboys of mahogany and red walnut—the aristocratic, antique relative of the despised black walnut of a later date—the fiery, single-hearted zeal for excellence that has put together patchwork quilts designed to outlast and outshine all other patchwork quilts, the ambition and pride that have spent themselves upon the pickle jar and the soft-soap kettle—these could have built all the cathedrals in the world, painted all the old pictures of the old masters, codified the Roman law, and written the American Constitution, had it only happened to be proper in the old days for women to concern themselves with matters remote from their kitchen ovens and their spinning wheels.

The passion for perfection still persists in the feminine heart, though it is now deprived of its old avenues of expression, and is not yet well inducted into its new. Mr. Pears and his brethren have relegated the private soap kettle to the museum of antiquities; Messrs. Cross and Blackwell and their descendants and competitors have pushed the private preserving pot into the desuetude of a long holiday. But the feminine passion for perfection still persists, and not all women are yet able to give it expression by studying astronomy or demanding votes or conducting clean-milk campaigns, or struggling after personal excellence. The quality known as "public spirit" and intellectual interests have not been immediately bestowed by a carefully compensating Providence upon the sex whose ancient occupations have left it, and whose future occupations still elude it.

There is Corinne, for example. There burns brightly within her bosom a fiery zeal for excellence; but Corinne has no interest whatever in perfecting her French accent, and only a very slight, almost negligible, one in providing seats

for saleswomen behind counters, and other similar good works. Upon what, then, can her passion expend itself in this day and generation? Corinne's secret ambition is to be a well-dressed woman. To that end she devotes hours of thought, hours of study. With that ambition at the point of realization, her eyes shine, her cheeks glow; with that ambition defeated by the carelessness or crudity of some dressmaker or tailor, or by some lack of prayerful effort on her own part, Corinne's features grow dolorous, her words are leaden, and she sees the universe shrouded in gray fog.

Corinne's sisters, both those of her blood and those merely of her sex, are prone to point out to her the folly of her ambition.

"It's perfectly ridiculous," says one of the thrifty ones, "for you to spend your money in this way. You haven't so much of it, goodness knows, and you work hard enough to get that. Why should you have to buy a velvet suit for I-shudder-to-think-what-price—"

"A hundred and twenty-five dollars," Corinne obligingly and defiantly supplies.

"When you would have been exactly as warm, exactly as well dressed, if you ask my opinion, in a cheviot for seventy-five—or even fifty, if you would only consent to go more than a block away from the avenue for your things. You could have invested that fifty dollars in something to help make your old age comfortable—"

"Old age will never give me a sensation as satisfying to my soul as the possession of that velvet suit," Corinne retorts with spirit. "If I have to sit in a county almshouse, quarreling with the other old inmates over a place near the radiator, I shall warm myself with the recollection of that brown velvet dress, and shall be glad I bought it!"

Against such obstinacy as this it is difficult for even the most eloquently critical of sisters to make much headway. Corinne's sister sputters feebly and calls the reply "nonsense," which it very probably is. Then she changes her base of attack. How much time does Corinne give to the selection of

her clothes? How many hours does she put in at the shops, which she might put in in a variety of useful ways—taking healthful exercise, improving her mind with literature, ancient or modern, elevating her spirit with the sight of great works of art? To all of which Corinne replies succinctly that, to her, the possession of good clothes is meat and drink, exercise and education, social life and spiritual uplift. Which, if somewhat exaggerated, is nevertheless sufficiently definite to bring all argument to a close.

It is true that Corinne does spend a great deal of money upon her garments—a great deal, that is, for a self-supporting woman in moderate circumstances. It is true, also, that she spends a great deal of time in obtaining them. Her afternoon walks are apt to lie along the avenue, with short excursions of a few rods into the side streets. She has a passion for little shops, for specialty shops, for all shops that cater to the desire for rarity, for exclusiveness. Corinne wishes to be attired in the height of the mode, but with a difference. She does not want to meet the model of her velvet suit done in serge on the subway train. She objects, if, on removing her jacket at the matinée, she finds that her neighbor's chiffon blouse is a replica of her own, with only the color changed.

Therefore, she eschews the department stores, except for fabrics and for the purposes of general study; and she gives her patronage to all those bijoux of shops wherewith the Ladies' Parade of New York is alluringly set. She is well known in many of them; her mail is very largely composed of announcements to the effect that "Juliette, late of Louise," will open a lingerie shop at No. 8 West Blank Street on April first; or that Mr. Morris Robinsky, for many years with Brodsky, solicits patronage in the establishment he has just opened as a tailor on his own account.

But the time and money that Corinne spends upon obtaining her clothes are proportionately less than that which she spends on taking care of them. Her wardrobe is like an automobile; the

initial expense is not so bad, but the upkeep is ruinous. An almost perpetual occupant of Corinne's small apartment is the visiting dressmaker; she is always changing collars, letting out sleeves, taking up hems, sewing on the hooks and eyes that seemed merely to have been blown on by the original costume makers. She is ripping out guimpes, freshening linings, steaming velvets, tightening buttons, padding dress hangers, making dress covers, bureau-drawer linings, and the like. It is obviously impossible for Corinne to do these things for herself. That part of her day that is not devoted to the profession in which she earns enough to gratify her ambition toward being well dressed is apt to be devoted to the aforementioned study of fabrics and styles, of bargains and of possibilities.

Now, all the critics of Corinne's manifestation of her passion for perfection have failed to touch upon the vital weakness of her position. So long as they imply that she is immoral for spending what she earns in ways displeasing to them, or in wasting her time in pursuits alien to their tastes, Corinne is justified in metaphorically snapping her fingers in their faces, and in maintaining that her own satisfaction, her success, justify her course. But the weakness of Corinne's position is this: She has not achieved what she set out to do. She is not a well-dressed woman. She is a failure. And any one upon whom failure is proved must make some other defense of her position than that she likes what she is doing; for no one likes to be a failure.

Corinne's failure is not a vulgarly obvious one. She does not wear tan laced boots with her velvet frock; she does not combine clashing colors; she does not offend the tender-hearted by barbarities in the shape of aigrette-trimmed hats or of furs dangling with the heads of little, dead, furry animals. In her desire to be in the mode, she never makes the fatal mistake of being a year or two in advance of it. She eschews the merely bizarre. Nevertheless, she has failed in her career as a well-dressed woman.



She has a passion for little shops, for specialty shops, for all shops that cater to the desire for rarity, for exclusiveness.

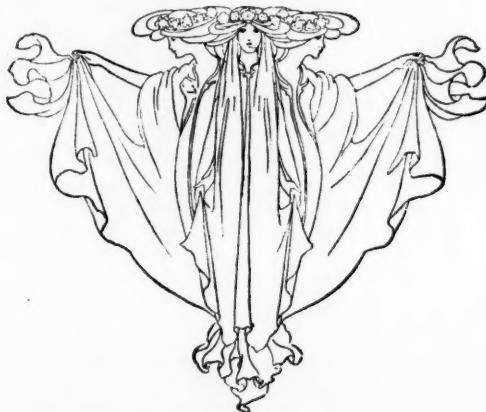
Like many other New York women, she has failed to see that dress is not an isolated fact in a woman's life in which success may be achieved without regard to other factors. The art of dress is not an absolute art, merely a relative one. And the fact to which it relates itself most insistently is the fact of background. Unless the normal manner of life lends itself readily, naturally, to the wearing of fine garments, the wearing of fine garments is no part of being well dressed.

One often thinks, seeing Corinne, among her teacups, charmingly arrayed in a tea gown of apricot crêpe and princesse lace, that Mrs. Overtheroad in the country, clad in calico, and bearing the hospitable glass of milk from the dairy, is better dressed than she. For Mrs. Overtheroad's lilac print, pretty in tone, charming with the crisp charm of starch and cleanliness, is not in revolt against the dairy or the farmhouse porch on which the milk is drunk; while Corinne's elegance clashes with her plain background. Corinne's tea gown requires a Louis Quinze boudoir, or a Watteau-decorated sitting room, as a harmonious background. Whereas Corinne's sitting room is a rather shabby, nondescript sort of place, with nothing in it to match the frivolous perfection of her tea gown.

So it is with the rest of that perfect wardrobe. Corinne comes proudly, exultantly, to dinner in the modest houses and apartments of her friends, clad in dinner gowns that would not discredit a banquet to an ambassador. She pours tea in a confection that brings out the shabbiness and the old-fashionedness of her hostess' furniture and her hostess' attire. To houses in which the only maid is engaged in last-minute work at the dinner table, she comes wearing carriage shoes that require a maid's attention, covering the most beautiful of slippers. And, worst of all, least forgivable of all, she wears carriage clothes in the street cars!

Corinne's passion for perfection has expended itself in vain. She has failed in the first requirement of her art. She has ignored the fact that the peacock requires a stately background of terrace and Italian garden, of marble fountain and balustrade, for the proper display of his iridescent beauty.

Only, some day, Corinne—perhaps even through the educational influence of her well-made garments—is going to awake to the fact of their incongruity. And then, what passion for perfection will be freed, to expend itself upon the clean-milk cause or the votes-for-women cause or the loan-art-exhibit cause!





DIVINELY TALL BY MARION SHORT

Author of "The Famous Cochran Children,"
"A Wager Won," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER

OF course, if Fred Barstow had realized at the time that his sister's penny-tossing scheme was to influence his after life far more than hers, he might not have agreed so carelessly that heads or tails was as good a way as any to determine the locality of her early-summer sojourn.

If heads had come up instead of tails when Bettie flipped the penny, she would have taken her outing at Atlantic City instead of in the Maine woods. In that case Miss Minnie Evans would probably never have entered Bettie's life at all, or—what is more to the point—proved a disturbing factor in the hitherto placid existence of Bettie's Brother Fred. It often happens that what we regard as unconsidered trifles prove to be the really great things in their action on human destiny, after all.

As Barstow glanced over the news of Wall Street one morning after his sister's return, that petite and attractive young woman suddenly appeared in the dining-room door, and waved before his vision a diminutive sheet of azure note paper.

"It's nothing about housekeeping, or I wouldn't drag you from your stock reports," she said apologetically. "But there's news in this letter so fascinating that it just won't wait!"

"Fire away, Bettie, but I have a premonition of evil."

"This letter is from dear Minnie Evans! She's on her way to pay me a visit, and arrives at the Grand Central Station this very afternoon!"

"Premonition proved correct!"

"Stop joking, Fred. I like Minnie Evans, and—"

"Joking?" Barstow uncrossed his legs, and struck the table with an emphatic fist. "Really, I'm put out with you, Bettie, that you invited that human giraffe here without consulting me."

Bettie's smooth forehead puckered protestingly.

"Why, I didn't dream you'd object to her coming! And 'giraffe' isn't a nice word to use in describing her at all."

"I've seen her pictures," Barstow insisted severely, "and I know just what I'm talking about. She is a skyscraping giraffe. She could eat off the top of a palm tree without effort, standing flat on the ground."

"She is slightly over six feet, I believe," conceded Bettie, with dignity. "But what of that? Sculptors call her a goddess, and just beg her to pose for them, though she's such a darling, babyish creature, when one becomes well acquainted with her, that she seems actually little. One forgets all about her unusual height."

"I shouldn't forget it," growled the young man irritably. "I don't think a woman has any excuse for outgrowing



As Miss Minnie Evans, raven-tressed and six feet one, looked into the cold, gray eyes of Mr. Fred Barstow, five feet three and flaxen-haired, she fell in love with that young man without further ado.

herself like that—it's masculine! It would always prejudice me against her."

A spark of temper shot from Bettie's violet eyes.

"Fred Barstow, is that your boasted sense of justice? The idea of your condemning a woman because she happens to be above the average height!

Why, it's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of! Are you to blame that you are only five feet three instead of something taller? Suppose I found fault with you about that?"

The next moment she bit her lip remorsefully. She knew that what her brother considered his unimposing stature was a secret cross to him, though

he had small reason for his sensitiveness on the subject. He was splendidly proportioned, and was universally considered a handsome and attractive chap.

"I was so anxious for you to like her, Fred," she continued more gently. "I've talked you up to the skies to her."

Barstow remained implacable.

"Of course! You'd have to talk me up to the skies in order to reach the lady's ears."

"She was so lovely to me in Maine!"

"You can't expect me to take a shine to a girl just because she fished with you in Maine." He struck at a crease in his paper with a pugnacious fist. "Understand, Bettie, there's to be no cordiality between us while she stays here. You'll have to inveigle your good old slave Murdoch into commission as her special escort, and count me out."

"If I must—I will. Though I'd rather keep Murdoch to myself. It's no fun for two girls to have only half a man apiece. Why do you take this stand, anyhow, Fred? Do give me the satisfaction of knowing that, at least."

Barstow tilted back his chair.

"I don't suppose I can explain it to your satisfaction, sis, but this Evans individual strikes me all wrong, and has from the beginning. In the first place, there's her name. Isn't 'Minnie' the limit of absurdity for a female over six feet in her socks?"

"What should she have named herself?" inquired Bettie, with a fine sarcasm that passed unnoticed.

"Abigail or Clytemnestra," answered Fred.

"Dreadful!" ejaculated Bettie.

"And look at the absurd note paper she affects!" he continued unheedingly. He pointed a scornful finger at the unobtrusive patch of blue in Bettie's hand. "Only a dainty doll of a girl should order such doll stationery as that. This giantess acquaintance of yours should use legal-cap paper with overgrown envelopes. She has no sense of the fitness of things."

"Well," said Bettie despairingly, "admitting all of Minnie's crimes against law and order, including her note paper

and her name, will you meet her at the station for me this afternoon—that's what I want to know?"

Barstow arose.

"I'll call a taxi for you, and you can meet her yourself. I'll promise not to bark or bite while she's here if I can restrain myself, but that's the only concession I can make."

"You place me in an awful position," Bettie complained, almost weeping. "How can I ever excuse your inattention to her? She's been crazy to meet you. I told her how popular you were with all the girls, and that you were so nice to my friends—"

Barstow interrupted testily:

"Bettie, if you had any sense of humor, you'd understand that in this case it is impossible. I'm just about tall enough to walk under her arm, and I don't care to appear ridiculous on the public street parading around with her. Added to my natural antipathy to the girl—it strikes me that this is about enough."

Stepping into the hall, he lifted his hat from the rack, pulling it well down over his steel-gray eyes.

"But what excuse can I give her?" begged Bettie. "I can never tell her it's antipathy."

"You can say that your brother can't train around with the crowd because the head foreman at his factory is sick. And that's no lie. He has the gripe."

With a wave of the hand he disappeared.

Bettie gave a resigned sigh, and, going to the telephone, called up Mr. Murdoch.

When Barstow got in from business late that afternoon, his sister met him at the door with a forgiving smile, and an interesting bit of information:

"Dan Murdoch is going to stand by me. I showed him Minnie's picture, and he knew her at a glance when he went to meet her at the station."

"Who's that playing the piano?" inquired Barstow.

He had a fine bass voice, and was very fond of music.

"That's Minnie. Mr. Murdoch is in

there, too. He's to dine with us and spend the evening."

When Barstow came downstairs in his dinner clothes, he saw Miss Evans and Mr. Murdoch standing in the door of the music room. Bettie promptly appeared to introduce him, and as Miss Minnie Evans, raven-tressed and six feet one, looked into the cold, gray eyes of Mr. Fred Barstow, five feet three and flaxen-haired, she fell in love with that young man without further ado. Perhaps it was not much to be marveled at, for—as Bettie often remarked—girls always liked Fred; but as soon as he returned her glance, that same cardiac combustion took place in the breast of the brother of Bettie. Perhaps that wasn't so very strange, either. All men found Minnie attractive, it was rumored.

At table, Barstow noticed that whenever Miss Evans laughed, a row of perfect pearls gleamed and glistened most entrancingly. He caught himself wishing for the reappearance of her wide, warm smile. A vibrant magnetism seemed to reach out from that smile and infold him in meshes at once delightful and terrifying.

Not knowing that his case was hopeless, he finally bethought himself to struggle against the lure of her. He did not wish to admire Miss Evans, he told himself, and would not be betrayed into it—ah, there was that smile again.

As the dinner drew to a close, Bettie gazed at her brother in frank bewilderment. How successfully he was concealing his antipathy to her guest. She felt very happy over it, and very grateful.

Later, when they were all assembled in the music room, Barstow experienced a moment of returning reason. He gave a frowning glance toward Miss Evans, conversing animatedly with Mr. Murdoch a few feet distant, and spoke aside to his sister.

"She's even taller than I thought she was. You don't notice it so much when she is sitting down."

He marched into a little smoking room adjoining, lighted his after-dinner cigar, and lounged back on the window

seat. He felt a sense of strange relief—as if he had just escaped from something vague, impalpable, but highly dangerous. He had never noticed another woman smile like that—he wondered if any other woman could. He decided to remain indefinitely there, alone with his cigar.

Miss Evans, subtly surmising his intention, resolved that he should not remain there alone—indefinitely. She sat down at the piano and began to sing.

The glowing tip of Barstow's cigar died to ashes. Miss Evans' rich soprano voice was as warmly beguiling in its way as her smile.

Mr. Murdoch, of soldierly bearing and commanding presence, stood by the singer's side, turning her music for her, and he did it well; but Miss Evans' eyes traveled persistently past the tall admirer of Bettie to Bettie's short brother, lounging yonder in the dimly lighted den.

Presently she unearthed a duet, and promptly, though shyly, called to Barstow to come and try it over with her. Murdoch bowed and gave place to him, going in search of Bettie.

When the duet was over, a bit of lacework, left by Bettie on the piano, gave Miss Evans a chance to confide in the uneasy Barstow, which she forthwith proceeded to do. Miss Evans knew that a pretty girl is never more attractive than when giving pretty confidences.

"I'm so fond of fancywork, like this of Bettie's," she said, passing her long, well-shaped fingers over the airy fabric as she spread it out on her knee where the pink satin of her gown showed through the meshes. "Papa was so cruelly disappointed that he had no sons that he brought me up quite like a boy. I never in my life did a stitch of anything just frivolous—like this. I've been trained in athletics at the expense of everything else. I'm an expert swimmer. I know how to box and fence. I ride like a cowboy. I hate all those things, but I've become proficient in them in order to please papa. But I'd rather make lace, and paint china, and all that sort of thing."



"Ain't he got the Statue of Liberty out for a walk?" exclaimed a gum-chewing girl, just up from a Coney Island free-concert hall.

She sent Barstow an appealing look from her innocent brown eyes.

"Perhaps I ought to be ashamed to acknowledge it, but after all the pains papa took with me—I'm not as cour-

ageous as he thinks I am. In my heart I'm still only a timid, shrinking sort of a girl, afraid of a mouse."

Barstow's gaze became more and more absorbed and interested. How

absolutely babyish and irresistibly feminine was Bettie's visitor! He felt aggrieved, distinctly aggrieved, at Bettie. Somehow she had contrived to give him an altogether false impression of this delightful girl who was favoring him with such charming glimpses of her inner life. He had even pictured her as unduly tall. It must be Bettie's fault, and he considered it to have been quite wrong of Bettie.

"It strikes me that the name 'Minnie' just fits you somehow, Miss Evans," he remarked appreciatively. "With your personality, you could hardly have borne any other, it seems to me."

"Yet some people don't think it belongs to me at all," and Miss Evans smiled her large, cordial smile. "I'm glad you like it, though," she added, "for I've always been very fond of it myself."

"And that small blue stationery you have chosen," went on the infatuated young man, with growing enthusiasm, "it seems the sort that just naturally belongs to a girl named Minnie."

Bettie interrupted him, entering from the next room, with Mr. Murdoch following.

"We have planned out the entire program for a week ahead," she announced animatedly. "To-morrow it's the seaside—a music-hall matinée, and a shore dinner."

"Lovely!" exclaimed Minnie, clapping her hands like a pleased child. "Just the four of us?"

Her gaze traveled inquiringly toward Barstow.

"N-no, only three," stammered Bettie. "You, Mr. Murdoch, and I. A foreman of Fred's is sick over in Fred's New Jersey factory, and Fred can't join us on any of our little excursions on that account."

"I don't know why you talk that way, Bettie," broke in Fred, with surprise and indignation in his every accent. "You surely don't think I'm so tied down to business as all that. Why, life wouldn't be worth living! Of course I'm going to the beach to-morrow."

Bettie gasped.

"Why, Brother Fred, you said only this morning—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted brother, with some asperity, "but you must have misunderstood me."

"Oh," said Bettie, a light beginning to dawn. "I guess I must!"

The next afternoon found young Barstow strolling along the beach by Minnie's side. The world had never before seemed such a royal place to him. The sun shone brilliantly, the sea was many hued and musical, the crowds picturesque and merry. And he was in the immediate radius of Miss Evans' generous, caressing smile.

They were both blissfully oblivious of the fact that her raised pink parasol—Miss Evans invariably wore pink—caused her to appear even more stately and tall than usual, and dwarfed her companion correspondingly. Their unconsciousness, however, was not to be of long duration.

"Ain't he the cute little Willie-boy?" exclaimed a gum-chewing girl, just up from a Coney Island free-concert hall. She nudged a youth in loud-checked trousers and a striped red jersey. "And ain't he got the Statue of Liberty out for a walk?" she added, gazing up at Minnie's towering parasol with an undisguised grin.

"Yep—they're the long and the short of it, all right," responded he of the strident attire. "They'd make good in vaudeville, just walkin' on to be looked at—great teamwork stunt! They'd put our turn on the bum in a minute!"

Barstow's face fell. The gladness went out of his day.

Making their escape from the crowd, he and Miss Evans walked out onto a pier that was practically deserted. When Barstow spoke—after a long period of complete silence—it was so formally that the poor girl thought she herself must be somehow to blame for the rudeness that they had encountered.

"I should not have constituted myself your escort here to-day, Miss Evans. I realize that. I hope you will accept my sincere apology. It will not happen again."

Miss Evans looked down at him wonderingly.

"I cannot accept your apology, Mr. Barstow, because you owe me none. I don't understand what you mean by offering it."

"I ought to have known it would provoke unpleasant comment," went on Barstow. "The—er—the disparity—" His face grew red. "No use going into particulars," he continued gruffly. "The character of the remarks made for our benefit renders that unnecessary."

Miss Evans turned and looked out across the sea. One should accept one's height or one's lack of it philosophically, she believed, and she could not understand Barstow's very apparent sensitiveness on the subject.

"Of course, personally," Barstow continued gallantly but untruthfully, "I resented what was said solely on your account. It must have been extremely unpleasant for you. And it would not have happened if Murdoch had been walking at your side instead of me."

Miss Evans lavished on him the full radiance of her opulent smile.

"Oh, the remarks of those people did not affect me in the least. I'm so used to being stared at as a sort of young giantess that I'd miss the attention if it were taken away. If you don't mind personally—there's nothing at all to be sorry about. I'm enjoying the afternoon with you so much! Ever so much more than if you had been Mr. Murdoch."

In spite of himself, the light came back to Barstow's countenance.

"Maybe it might not happen again," he remarked thoughtfully, "for after all they were just a couple of hoodlums."

"Certainly," agreed Miss Evans. "That's all—hoodlums."

At that moment a riotous wind lifted Barstow's new panama from his head, and, in making a grab for it, he reached a trifle too far, lost his balance, and fell off the pier into the deep water below.

There was a shout from the shore. The life-savers, rowing about idly in the midst of a crowd of swimmers,

headed their boat in Barstow's direction instantly. But Miss Evans never saw the life-savers. She knew that her friend was not helping himself as he should, his head having struck a floating barrel as he fell, and feared that he might be in danger.

Without a moment's hesitation, she leaped from the pier to his assistance, fully dressed as she was, not even stopping to discard her pink parasol. Swimming was one of her star accomplishments.

A gaping crowd surrounded them when the life-savers brought them ashore.

"Hully gee!" remarked the same tough-looking youth whom they had before encountered with the gum-chewing girl. "Look at the Statue of Liberty now! Her baby boy tried to lose her by jumping off the dock, but he couldn't!"

A titter of rude, but uncontrollable, laughter ran among the onlookers. Even the life-savers grinned.

The drenched couple proceeded to a secluded spot on the beach, and remained there long enough for the blazing sun and a rampant wind to dry their clothing.

After a while Murdoch and Bettie came ambling along.

"Where have you two been hiding yourselves?" questioned Murdoch.

"Hiding is good!" retorted Barstow bitterly.

"There was such a fine vaudeville show at the music hall," supplemented Bettie. "You don't know what you missed."

"And you don't know what you missed," burst out her brother, with feeling. "Moving pictures have happened right out here on the beach."

"Why, Minnie!" exclaimed Bettie suddenly, for the first time taking a comprehensive look at the couple before her. "You look all crumpled—as if you had been out in the rain!"

"What happened?" queried Murdoch with lively interest. "Can it be that you—that Miss Evans—" But no," he continued enigmatically, "they could not

have meant you. Some one told us on our way down here that there had been a screamingly funny accident, and that everybody was laughing over it. Did you witness it?"

"No," said Barstow dryly, "I did not witness it, because I was it myself!"

For several days thereafter Barstow kept determinedly away from his sister and her guest, returning to his first resolution of absolute aloofness. He

dined at his club. He went straight to his room on entering the house. When sometimes he heard Miss Evans singing below, it made his heart tremble. He recognized with terror that he—the overabbreviated—had become entirely too fond of her—the unduly elongated one—and that it would never do.

One evening, realizing that his only safety lay in flight, he rushed down the stairs, past the door from which floated the maddening music, and out into the streets.

He remembered that there was a small, quiet park a few blocks away. On reaching it, he dropped down on a bench, and lighted a cigar.

Minnie's face—her voice—her laugh! Minnie's magnificent, colossal figure! Why must he dream of them by night and think of them by day? He argued with himself, ridiculed himself; called Mr. Fred Barstow hard names; made solemn and irrevocable resolutions to drive the overgrown girl from his mind and heart forever—then went back and dreamed the whole sweet dream of her over again. He gave a helpless sigh, and covered his eyes with his hand.

When he looked up, Miss Evans her-



Without a moment's hesitation, she leaped from the pier.

self stood before him, gazing down from her imposing height.

"I—I followed you of my own accord," she announced pantingly. "Bettie did not know."

She clutched with nervous fingers at her scarf.

"Be seated, won't you?" said Barstow dazedly. He arose, indicating the bench with an uncertain gesture.

Miss Evans thanked him, and sank down like a huge, pink, fragrant cloud. Barstow reseated himself, choosing the extreme other end of the bench.

"There's something very particular that I felt I must ask you," began Miss Evans, her sweet voice trembling. "I feared I should have no opportunity to do so at the house. It has seemed to me of late that you were avoiding me. I have scarcely seen you since that day at the beach. I wanted to find out from you direct if—if—" The tears came into her tones, and something else that caused Barstow's stubborn heart to thrill. She faltered a moment, then resumed: "Does my staying with Bettie cause you—annoyance?"

Barstow struggled with himself. He must be reserved—icy—on her account as well as his own. But it is difficult to remain icy when in the immediate neighborhood of a glowing pink cloud.

"I love you," he said, melting. "That's why I have avoided you," and he raised her hand to his lips.

Miss Evans hid her face in her handkerchief, and began to cry, very softly.

"Don't!" begged the repentant Barstow. "I'll never bother you again by speaking of my folly."

Miss Evans looked at him, smiling quiveringly over a wad of damp handkerchief.

"I'm crying because I'm so happy," she said. "You see—I love you, too!"

For a few brief moments the prosaic patch of park became limitless, moonlit Arcady!

Then, slowly and sadly, Barstow explained to her how necessary it was—if they would avoid the ridicule of the world—to renounce each other.

"And I'll start for home to-morrow," she said, in a sweet, ingénue way that

exactly matched her name and stationery if it didn't correspond with her figure; "for if we must part, the sooner the break comes, the better."

As they started along the deserted walk, Barstow's arm crept snugly about his beloved's waist. He felt absurd, but blissfully so.

"Oh, Mr. Barstow," she exclaimed impulsively, "of course our love is hopeless, yet one can't help wishing to hope. It may be a very trivial straw to catch at, but—I wonder—if I discarded the high French heels I wear, and you built up your low ones—just a little—I wonder—"

Barstow gazed at her adoringly.

"Oh, Minnie—if it could only be—how I should love to care for and protect you all my life!"

At that psychological instant, around a curve in the walk swung two tall club-men, hilarious with drink. Barstow snatched his arm from about Miss Evans' waist, but too late to avoid notice and comment.

"Pon my word," exclaimed the more inebriated of the two, halting directly in the path of the embarrassed sweethearts, "a midget making love to an Amazon, b'thunder!"

"Move on, you drunken beast!" commanded Barstow, enraged.

"Wow!" chuckled the second man, giving his companion an amused dig in the ribs.

"He insulted me!" exclaimed the first aggressor, his levity turning to drunken wrath. "He called me a beast! No gen'leman can p'mit insult!"

He doubled up his fist and struck out at Barstow.

The next moment he lay sprawled out on the walk. Miss Evans' boxing was her most successful athletic accomplishment.

The second man reeled in bewilderment. He could not understand just who or what had floored his stalwart friend. As he stooped to assist the fallen one to his feet, Barstow and Miss Evans passed on out of sight.

"Oh, isn't it splendid that papa brought me up like a boy, after all!"

exclaimed Minnie, clasping her hands in gratitude. "Just think what might have happened to you if I hadn't been able to tackle him!"

Barstow's answer was coldly bitter:

"And only a moment ago I was wishing that I might care for and protect you all my life! When it came to a show-down, you were the one who cared for and protected me. That big brute could have reduced me to pulp at one blow. It's a husband's duty to fight for and protect his wife, not the reverse. It's perfectly plain, Minnie, that we are doomed to live apart. High heels or no high heels, this settles the question forever!"

Barstow came home early the next day. An expressman's wagon was waiting at the door for Miss Evans' trunks. Barstow passed on slowly into the dining room, and sat down dejectedly. The woman he loved was leaving the shelter of his roof forever!

Mechanically he spread his evening paper out before him.

Presently he suspected that Miss Evans was standing in the doorway. He held to his paper, terror-stricken at the thought of that coming farewell.

"My handkerchief," exclaimed Miss Evans faintly. "I think I lost it."

"Do you?" asked Barstow spasmodically, getting to his feet.

"No," acknowledged Minnie, "I may as well be truthful—I don't. What I



"Go away, Bettie," he command'd, with the drowsiness of utter content.

really came for was to take a last look at you."

"You make me feel like a corpse," objected Barstow, his countenance steeped in gloom, "talking about 'last looks.' "

Miss Evans had on a rose-pink linen gown and a big rose-colored hat, appearing to Barstow's dazzled eyes more massively beautiful than ever.

She offered her hand.

"Good-by," she whispered.

"Say something more than that,

won't you?" implored Barstow, clinging to her magnetic fingers. "Just a few words—I can remember when you are gone!"

"Why should you wish to remember?" she inquired sorrowfully. "You hate me because I saved you from that ruffian in the park—because I'm big and strong and athletic—"

"Hate you?" protested Barstow, with deep reproach. "How can you say such a thing? I only hate myself that you're the better man of the two—that's all."

"Then," cried Miss Evans, in ringing tones, "if I am the better man of the two, as you say, I'm going to do what you ought to do, but won't—give us our chance of happiness. Since you aren't brave enough to ask me to marry you in the face of the ridicule of the world, I—"

"Stop!" thundered Barstow. "Don't dare to propose to me! That would be the final smash of my manhood and self-respect!"

Miss Evans gasped, retiring instantly into the deep recesses of her natural femininity again.

"Here's where I do the proposing and the accepting both!" continued the roused young man tumultuously. "I'm going to marry you, Minnie Evans, if the entire community laughs itself to death at the incongruity of it, and, what's more, I'm going to be happy and make you happy. What a fool I was to think I could ever let you go!"

Bettie, a few minutes afterward, came to an amazed halt on the threshold.

The rose-pink goddess sat in an armchair, Barstow kneeling by her side, his blond locks resting peacefully against her broad, beautiful shoulder.

"Go away, Bettie," he commanded, with the drowsiness of utter content. "Minnie's going to stay—forever. Tell the expressman he needn't wait."

And Minnie, sighing blissfully, smiled her wide, warm smile!



A Summer Morning

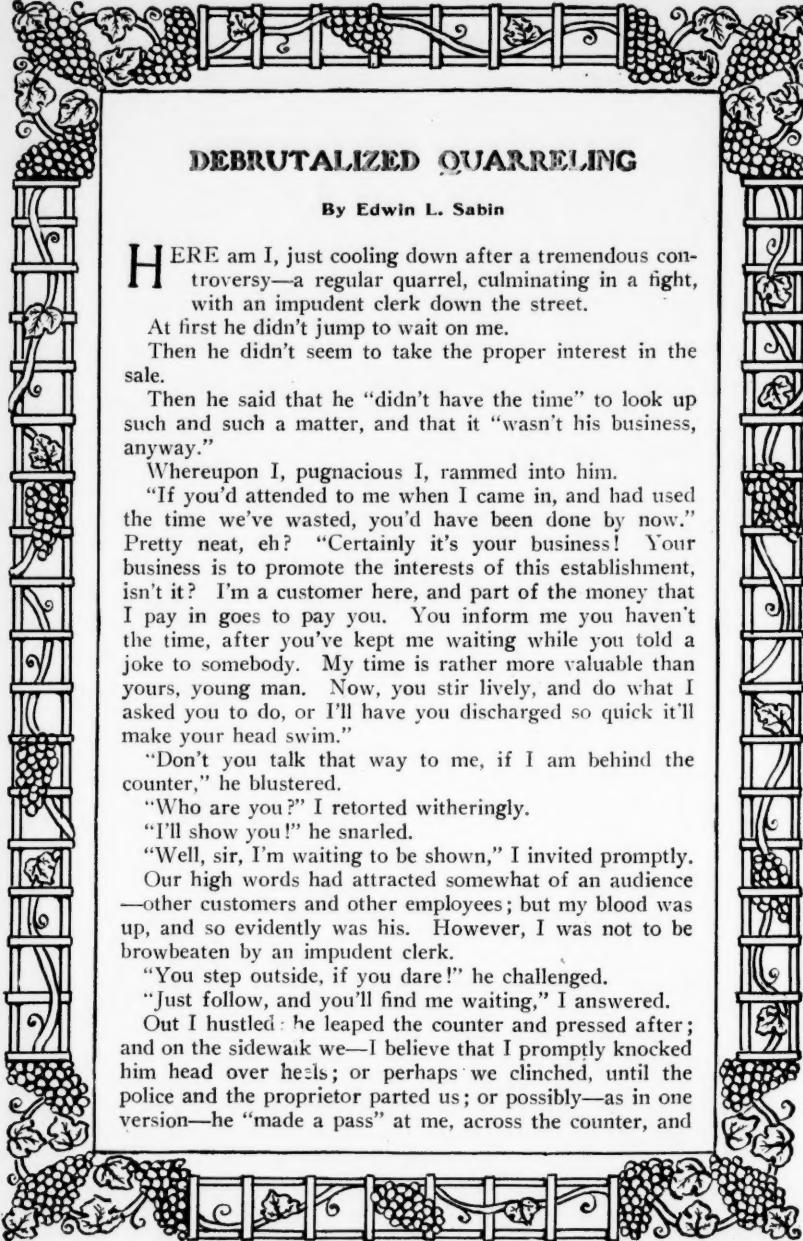
ALL gold and green in flickering shades,
The lawn lies free to winds that pass,
And "clickit, clickit," with its blades
The mower bites the grass.

At cautious distance just behind,
Bulge-eyed, with ready bill at need,
Sir Robin trips, his prudent mind
Aware of mouths to feed;

While flashes on each emerald spike—
Showing the day moods one and all
In its clear globe—a dewdrop, like
A fairy gazing ball.

If mumbling, grumbling storm clouds pend,
O little prophet, I but smile!
For howso'er this day may end,
This morn has been worth while!

RHEEM DOUGLAS.



DEBRUTALIZED QUARRELING

By Edwin L. Sabin

HERE am I, just cooling down after a tremendous controversy—a regular quarrel, culminating in a fight, with an impudent clerk down the street.

At first he didn't jump to wait on me.

Then he didn't seem to take the proper interest in the sale.

Then he said that he "didn't have the time" to look up such and such a matter, and that it "wasn't his business, anyway."

Whereupon I, pugnacious I, rammed into him.

"If you'd attended to me when I came in, and had used the time we've wasted, you'd have been done by now." Pretty neat, eh? "Certainly it's your business! Your business is to promote the interests of this establishment, isn't it? I'm a customer here, and part of the money that I pay in goes to pay you. You inform me you haven't the time, after you've kept me waiting while you told a joke to somebody. My time is rather more valuable than yours, young man. Now, you stir lively, and do what I asked you to do, or I'll have you discharged so quick it'll make your head swim."

"Don't you talk that way to me, if I am behind the counter," he blustered.

"Who are you?" I retorted witheringly.

"I'll show you!" he snarled.

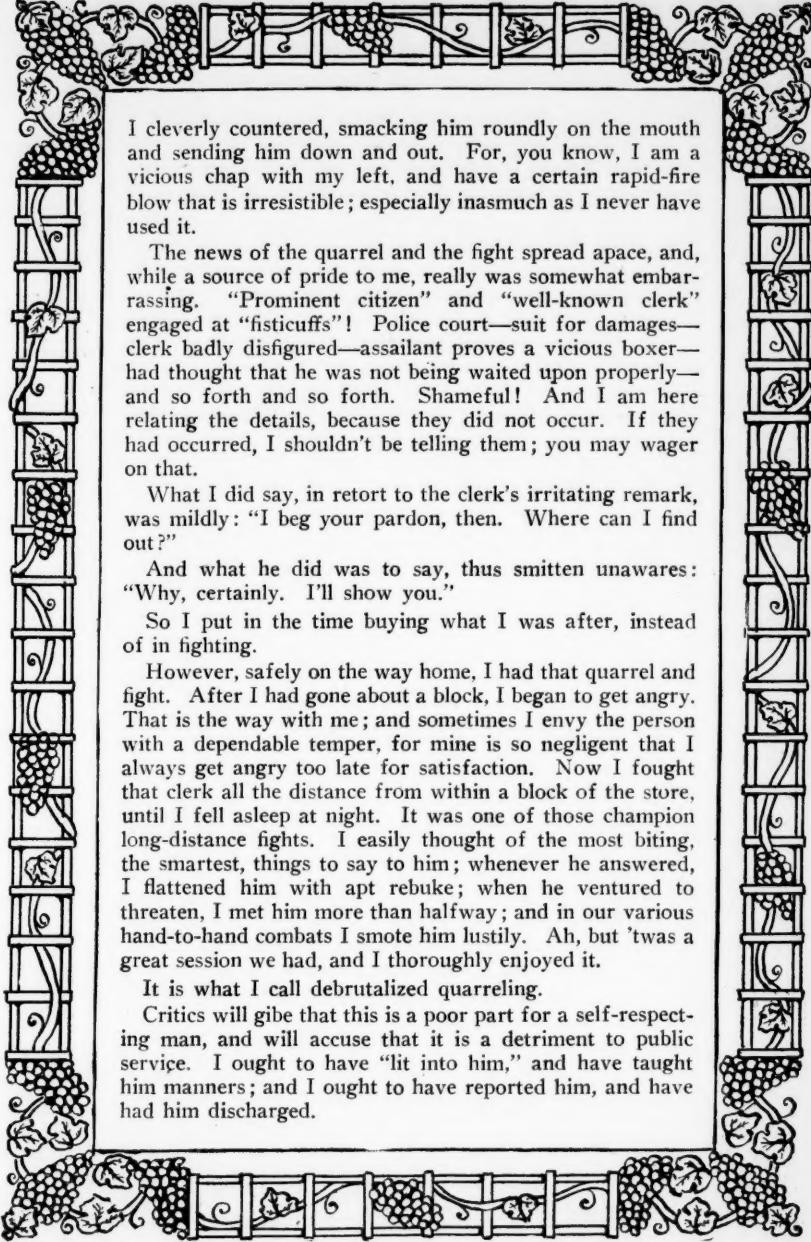
"Well, sir, I'm waiting to be shown," I invited promptly.

Our high words had attracted somewhat of an audience—other customers and other employees; but my blood was up, and so evidently was his. However, I was not to be browbeaten by an impudent clerk.

"You step outside, if you dare!" he challenged.

"Just follow, and you'll find me waiting," I answered.

Out I hustled: he leaped the counter and pressed after; and on the sidewalk we—I believe that I promptly knocked him head over heels; or perhaps we clinched, until the police and the proprietor parted us; or possibly—as in one version—he "made a pass" at me, across the counter, and



I cleverly countered, smacking him roundly on the mouth and sending him down and out. For, you know, I am a vicious chap with my left, and have a certain rapid-fire blow that is irresistible; especially inasmuch as I never have used it.

The news of the quarrel and the fight spread apace, and, while a source of pride to me, really was somewhat embarrassing. "Prominent citizen" and "well-known clerk" engaged at "fisticuffs"! Police court—suit for damages—clerk badly disfigured—assailant proves a vicious boxer—had thought that he was not being waited upon properly—and so forth and so forth. Shameful! And I am here relating the details, because they did not occur. If they had occurred, I shouldn't be telling them; you may wager on that.

What I did say, in retort to the clerk's irritating remark, was mildly: "I beg your pardon, then. Where can I find out?"

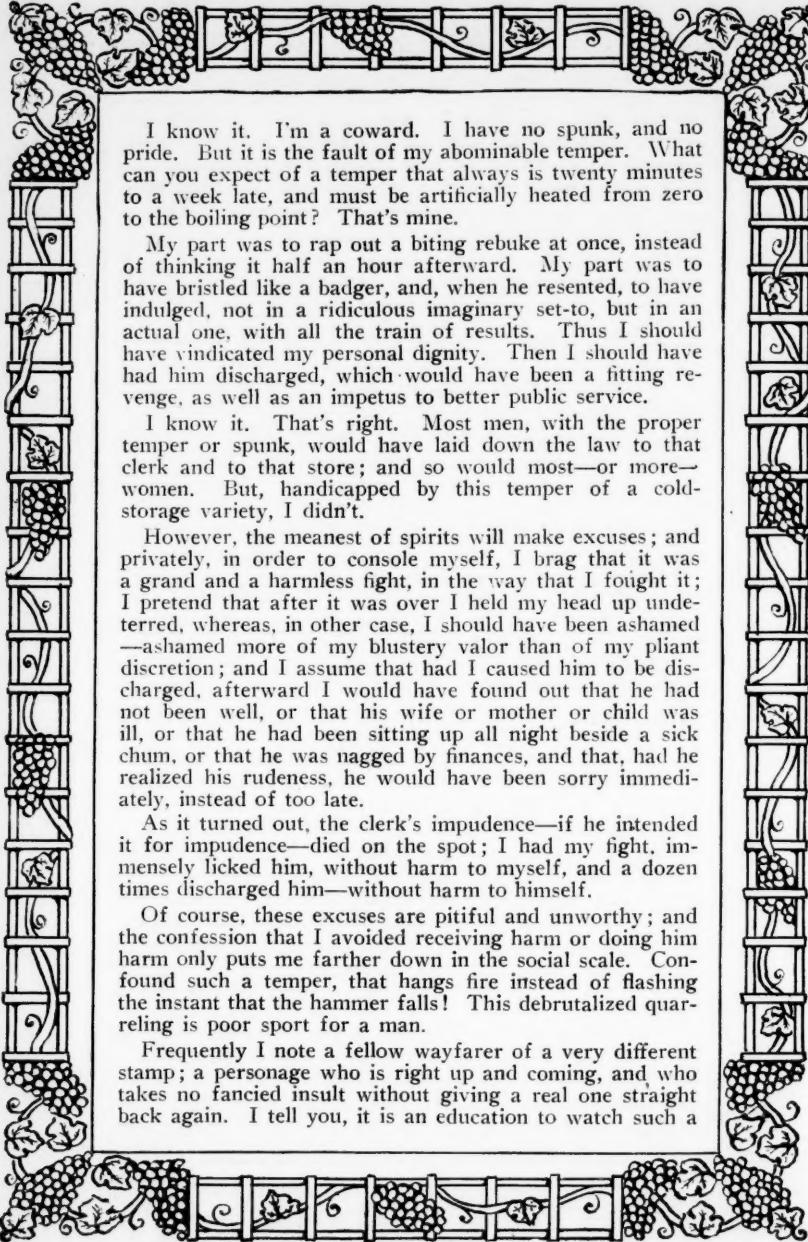
And what he did was to say, thus smitten unawares: "Why, certainly. I'll show you."

So I put in the time buying what I was after, instead of in fighting.

However, safely on the way home, I had that quarrel and fight. After I had gone about a block, I began to get angry. That is the way with me; and sometimes I envy the person with a dependable temper, for mine is so negligent that I always get angry too late for satisfaction. Now I fought that clerk all the distance from within a block of the store, until I fell asleep at night. It was one of those champion long-distance fights. I easily thought of the most biting, the smartest, things to say to him; whenever he answered, I flattened him with apt rebuke; when he ventured to threaten, I met him more than halfway; and in our various hand-to-hand combats I smote him lustily. Ah, but 'twas a great session we had, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

It is what I call *debrutalized quarreling*.

Critics will gibe that this is a poor part for a self-respecting man, and will accuse that it is a detriment to public service. I ought to have "lit into him," and have taught him manners; and I ought to have reported him, and have had him discharged.



I know it. I'm a coward. I have no spunk, and no pride. But it is the fault of my abominable temper. What can you expect of a temper that always is twenty minutes to a week late, and must be artificially heated from zero to the boiling point? That's mine.

My part was to rap out a biting rebuke at once, instead of thinking it half an hour afterward. My part was to have bristled like a badger, and, when he resented, to have indulged, not in a ridiculous imaginary set-to, but in an actual one, with all the train of results. Thus I should have vindicated my personal dignity. Then I should have had him discharged, which would have been a fitting revenge, as well as an impetus to better public service.

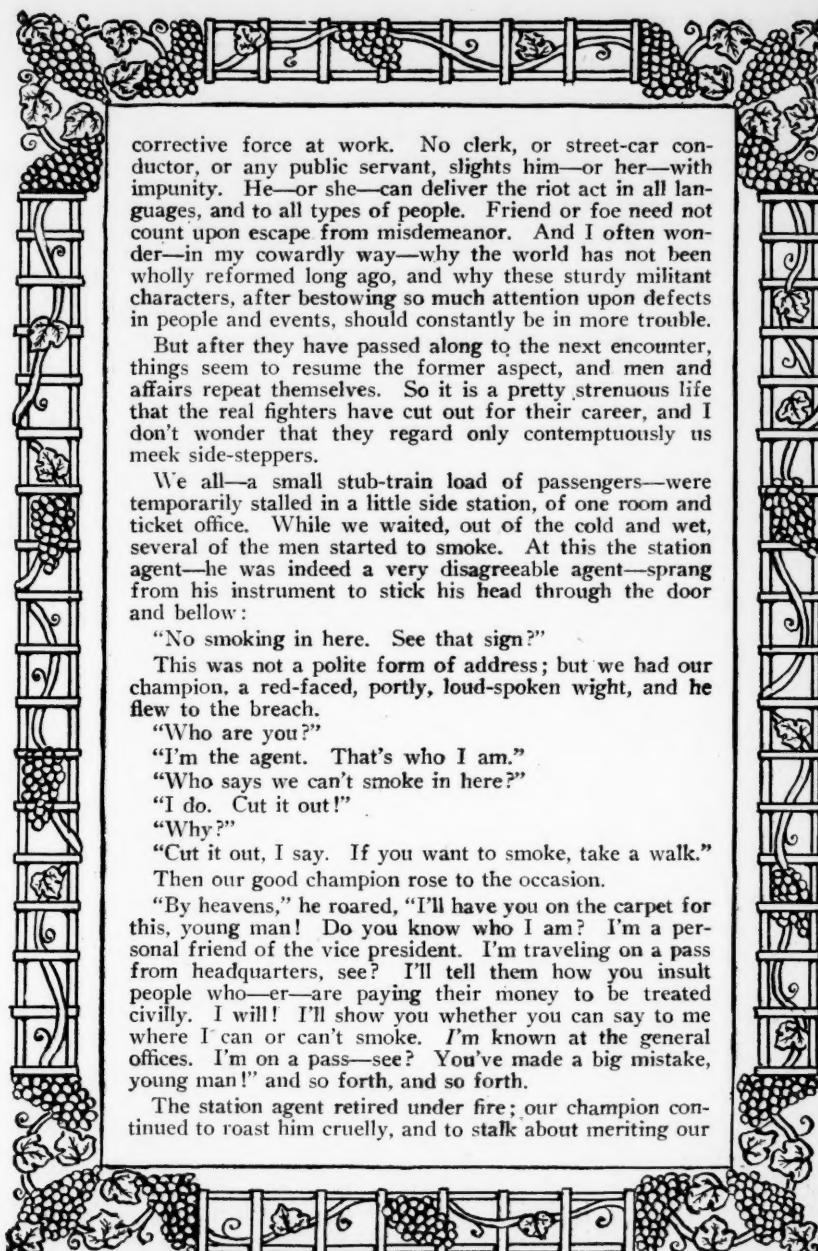
I know it. That's right. Most men, with the proper temper or spunk, would have laid down the law to that clerk and to that store; and so would most—or more—women. But, handicapped by this temper of a cold-storage variety, I didn't.

However, the meanest of spirits will make excuses; and privately, in order to console myself, I brag that it was a grand and a harmless fight, in the way that I fought it; I pretend that after it was over I held my head up undeterred, whereas, in other case, I should have been ashamed—ashamed more of my blustery valor than of my pliant discretion; and I assume that had I caused him to be discharged, afterward I would have found out that he had not been well, or that his wife or mother or child was ill, or that he had been sitting up all night beside a sick chum, or that he was nagged by finances, and that, had he realized his rudeness, he would have been sorry immediately, instead of too late.

As it turned out, the clerk's impudence—if he intended it for impudence—died on the spot; I had my fight, immensely licked him, without harm to myself, and a dozen times discharged him—without harm to himself.

Of course, these excuses are pitiful and unworthy; and the confession that I avoided receiving harm or doing him harm only puts me farther down in the social scale. Confound such a temper, that hangs fire instead of flashing the instant that the hammer falls! This debrutalized quarreling is poor sport for a man.

Frequently I note a fellow wayfarer of a very different stamp; a personage who is right up and coming, and who takes no fancied insult without giving a real one straight back again. I tell you, it is an education to watch such a



corrective force at work. No clerk, or street-car conductor, or any public servant, slights him—or her—with impunity. He—or she—can deliver the riot act in all languages, and to all types of people. Friend or foe need not count upon escape from misdemeanor. And I often wonder—in my cowardly way—why the world has not been wholly reformed long ago, and why these sturdy militant characters, after bestowing so much attention upon defects in people and events, should constantly be in more trouble.

But after they have passed along to the next encounter, things seem to resume the former aspect, and men and affairs repeat themselves. So it is a pretty strenuous life that the real fighters have cut out for their career, and I don't wonder that they regard only contemptuously us meek side-steppers.

We all—a small stub-train load of passengers—were temporarily stalled in a little side station, of one room and ticket office. While we waited, out of the cold and wet, several of the men started to smoke. At this the station agent—he was indeed a very disagreeable agent—sprang from his instrument to stick his head through the door and bellow:

“No smoking in here. See that sign?”

This was not a polite form of address; but we had our champion, a red-faced, portly, loud-spoken wight, and he flew to the breach.

“Who are you?”

“I’m the agent. That’s who I am.”

“Who says we can’t smoke in here?”

“I do. Cut it out!”

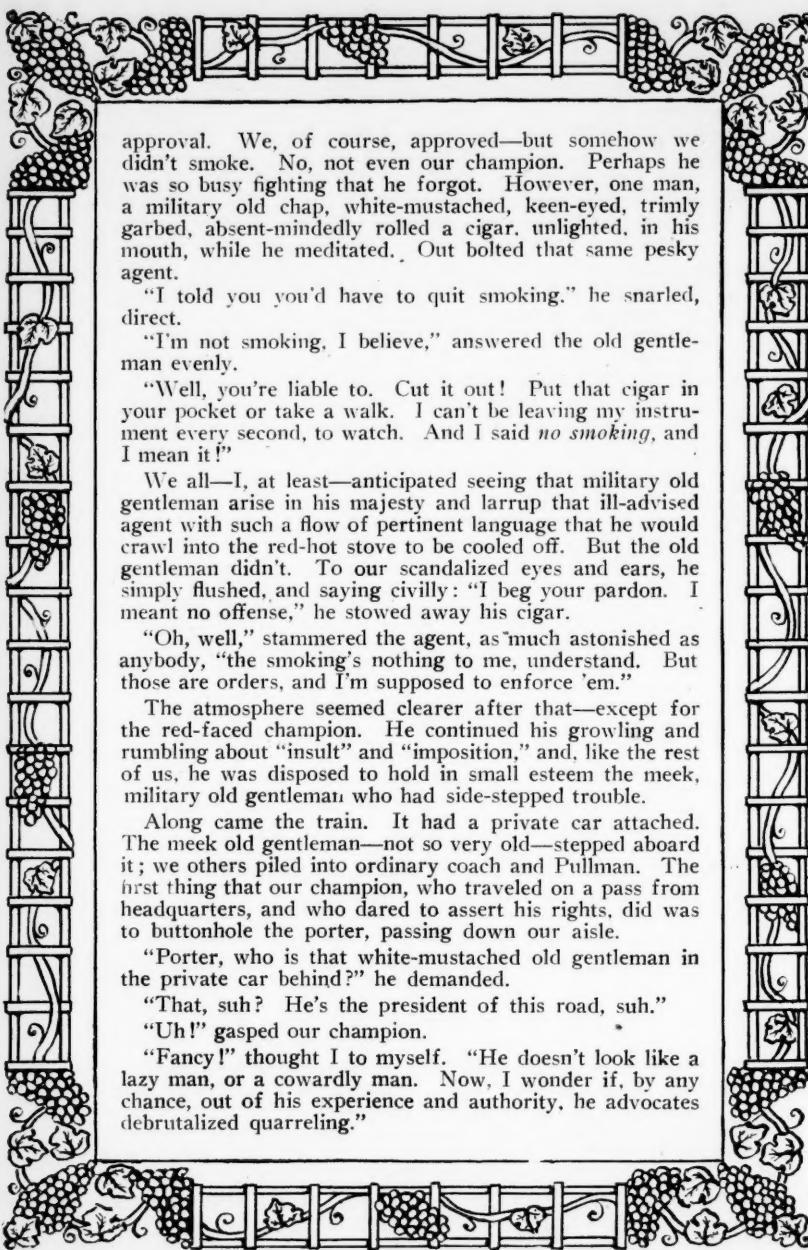
“Why?”

“Cut it out, I say. If you want to smoke, take a walk.”

Then our good champion rose to the occasion.

“By heavens,” he roared, “I’ll have you on the carpet for this, young man! Do you know who I am? I’m a personal friend of the vice president. I’m traveling on a pass from headquarters, see? I’ll tell them how you insult people who—er—are paying their money to be treated civilly. I will! I’ll show you whether you can say to me where I can or can’t smoke. I’m known at the general offices. I’m on a pass—see? You’ve made a big mistake, young man!” and so forth, and so forth.

The station agent retired under fire; our champion continued to roast him cruelly, and to stalk about meriting our



approval. We, of course, approved—but somehow we didn't smoke. No, not even our champion. Perhaps he was so busy fighting that he forgot. However, one man, a military old chap, white-mustached, keen-eyed, trimly garbed, absent-mindedly rolled a cigar, unlighted, in his mouth, while he meditated. Out bolted that same pesky agent.

"I told you you'd have to quit smoking," he snarled, direct.

"I'm not smoking, I believe," answered the old gentleman evenly.

"Well, you're liable to. Cut it out! Put that cigar in your pocket or take a walk. I can't be leaving my instrument every second, to watch. And I said *no smoking*, and I mean it!"

We all—I, at least—anticipated seeing that military old gentleman arise in his majesty and larrup that ill-advised agent with such a flow of pertinent language that he would crawl into the red-hot stove to be cooled off. But the old gentleman didn't. To our scandalized eyes and ears, he simply flushed, and saying civilly: "I beg your pardon. I meant no offense," he stowed away his cigar.

"Oh, well," stammered the agent, as much astonished as anybody, "the smoking's nothing to me, understand. But those are orders, and I'm supposed to enforce 'em."

The atmosphere seemed clearer after that—except for the red-faced champion. He continued his growling and rumbling about "insult" and "imposition," and, like the rest of us, he was disposed to hold in small esteem the meek, military old gentleman who had side-stepped trouble.

Along came the train. It had a private car attached. The meek old gentleman—not so very old—stepped aboard it; we others piled into ordinary coach and Pullman. The first thing that our champion, who traveled on a pass from headquarters, and who dared to assert his rights, did was to buttonhole the porter, passing down our aisle.

"Porter, who is that white-mustached old gentleman in the private car behind?" he demanded.

"That, suh? He's the president of this road, suh."

"Uh!" gasped our champion.

"Fancy!" thought I to myself. "He doesn't look like a lazy man, or a cowardly man. Now, I wonder if, by any chance, out of his experience and authority, he advocates debrutalized quarreling."



Shelter

By
**GRACE
MARGARET
GALLAHER**

Author of "The Sisters," "Her Dwelling Place," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

NOT a sound jarred the deep hush; not a light warmed the black shadows of the pines or the blue-white of the snow; not a trace of human life eased the desolation; hills, forests, climbing road, and winding river lay wholly in the power of the glittering winter moon and the icy stars. There was no wind. The air was like liquid diamonds, and a cold, keen as a sword blade, cut it. It might have been some world before creation's fires were kindled, or one dead and frozen to the heart æons gone. That flowers could ever clothe the hills, or birds sing in the trees, or the river leap in joy, was beyond the fancy that night.

The one solitary being struggling through this waste dropped her bag in the snow, and stared up at the stars as if begging their keen wits to untangle her maze, for surely this was the road to Nowhere. Dumbly, bewilderment gave place to awe, an awe so chill that all her small fears of the day—of the crowd, of the journey, of the lonely road—were frozen lifeless in its grasp. It was terror of that calm, inexorable Nature that has been from the beginning and will be to eternity, to whom our evanescent lives are as the smudge of shadow upon the snow, flung for an hour, wiped out at the first shift of the moon in heaven. What were happiness or sorrow, honor or shame, even death itself, before this passionless lone-

liness, this icy splendor? She sighed with a long, tremulous breath.

At that moment, far off in the marshes, a wild duck sent into the night its high, melancholy cry. All her late terrors rushed again upon the girl in a panic. Where was she? How far behind was the last house she had passed? Where was the next? Should she turn back? Was it wiser to push on? In the hurry of her mind, she could not tell whether it had been minutes or hours since the last light had twinkled a kindly ray on her path. She could not go back; surely some house must be beyond that jut of rock. She dragged up her bag mechanically, for she had long ceased to regard its contents, and started ahead.

At first she went swiftly, fear urging her; then, like a mechanism beginning to run down as its motive power dwindles, her feet lagged. Once she came to a stop, leaning against a tree, to pant there a while, gathering all her powers; then doggedly she trudged on through the hard, deep snow. Once she thought how good it was that the wind did not blow, and that the snow was not drifted; once she wondered how she could ever have been reckless enough to start from the Junction; once she cringed with the ache of her frosted hands. But most of the time she plowed along, bent over like an old woman, the bag thumping against her

knees. Once she said her own name to herself because it was beyond believing that she, who had never been as far as the corner after dark alone, should be traversing these vast solitudes at dead of night. She wondered, numbly, why she did not die outright of the monstrous strangeness of it; yet all the while she pushed her exhausted body through the snow.

After a long time—or did it only seem long?—she rounded the crag that thrust out over the road, and began to climb up again. Ah, a narrow, clear beam of light shot out across the wintry ocean from some lighthouse ahead! She set her teeth, gripped her bag with her rigid hands, and stumbled toward it. A small old house it proved, set on a knoll, fenced off from the woods by a prim little fence of sharpened pickets. The gate, blocked with snow, resisted her shaking efforts to open it, then yieldeed suddenly, throwing her face downward. For a moment she lay there in the snow, loving the soft warmth of it, and wondering if the house could be more comfortable. Then she beat herself up by all her forces of reason and courage, and staggered to the door.

There, indeed, she wavered. Who was behind it, and how explain her presence at that hour of the night?

"They'll think it's a tramp," she argued; then, from some hidden spring of humor not yet frozen: "But they'll know anybody as small as me can't hurt 'em."

Then she knocked, a fairly stout blow from a cramped fist.

The door was thrown open upon a wide, low room, brimming with warmth, and mellow with the light of lamp and glowing stove. A very tall man extended his hand for her bag, saying as coolly as if strange women knocked at his house every winter night:

"Good evenin'. Come right in."

She longed to drop down at his feet and lie stretched out flat in the heat of the fire, but she succeeded in saying, quietly enough, though her teeth clicked over each word:

"I'm walkin' to Pettipaug, an' I've

kind o' lost my direction. Can you tell me if I'm goin' right?"

The man lifted the bag with one hand and her with the other.

"Set down a spell an' thaw out," still without any surprise of face or voice.

He pulled to the stove a rocking-chair, close padded with old-fashioned chintz, and seated her in it. She closed her eyes, drooped her head against its soft back, and seemed to crumple into a dreary little heap.

"Taste this, it'll start up your blood."

The man's voice was right in her ears.

"I'm temperance," in a breath of sound, her eyes still shut.

"So'm I. Drink!"

Like a docile child, she obeyed, gulping down a fiery liquid that shot the blood surging to her head and sent a revivifying heat through all her chilled veins.

"Now, let's kind o' dry out."

She felt him fumbling with the pins of her hat; not deftly, for, with the hat, down tumbled her hair, a flax of yellow locks, curling and wild. Then he drew off her coat, her body bending instinctively to his motions. Next, his fingers were busy at her ankles. Strengthened by the whisky, she sat up anxiously. Already he had drawn off her little, clumsy boots, and was pulling at her sodden stockings.

"I ain't a little girl," she protested, for her dignity's sake.

The man laughed.

"Sure you ain't," he agreed, in his slow drawl, which had a sound of amused pleasure in it as at some jest hidden from every one but himself.

He was gone, and back, and on his knees again, wrapping up her feet in a great, soft blanket.

"Thank you," she murmured. "You're real kind."

Next, he was stirring up the fire, pulling forward the coffeepot, and rattling down a saucepan.

"Don't cook anythin' for me, please," she begged.

"I'd relish a meal myself," he returned serenely. "Supper lies considerble far back on the trail."

The girl watched him slice ham, bring out bread and butter, and spread a clean white cloth on the end of the table, in a warm and drowsy content. Tomorrow she would be both shocked and alarmed at this extraordinary divergence from her neat and ordered path, but to-night it all seemed part of a queer dream that promised to end beautifully.

She followed her host's motions with uncritical appraisement. He was a tall, lean man, with a keen, humorous face, and hawk eyes; his movements had a queer kind of awkward swiftness and skill, and he seemed never to hang in the wind over a decision. She was reminded of the instant welcome that he had given her.

"He's homely in the face," she told herself, "but he's real kind appearin'. I should say he was along in years; maybe all o' thirty-five."

The man said nothing—evidently he was not much given to speech—but worked away with his odd precision, frying the ham, bringing out of the pantry cookies, fruit cake, and other delicacies. He gave the ham a smart turn, shook up the coffeepot, and announced smilingly:

"Supper!"

Before she could move, he had lifted her, chair and all, to the table.

"Take off!" he urged, in country parlance, beginning to pass the dishes to her.

"The bread an' the butter's both home-made." He gave her a steaming cup of coffee.

The girl ate ravenously. "I'm makin' a sight o' myself," she apologized, as she helped herself to more bread, "but I ain't ate anythin' since breakfast."

"I notice women act that triflin' way about their food," he informed her, "try to run their engines all day on a stick o' wood."

They laughed together, he in his ironic chuckle, she in a little bubble of pretty sound.

"I feel like I could run to Pettipaug, I'm so heartened up," she told him, when they had finished. "How far is it?"

"Well, quite a piece," noncommittally. "I'm goin' to put you where you'll be warm again."

He lifted the chair back to the stove. She had a sensation of great strength only half used as she saw the long muscles of his arms flex and tighten.

"Let me help do the dishes," she urged, as she saw him stack them in a pan.

"Ain't anybody goin' to do 'em," he countered easily. "I'm a-goin' to pile 'em up in the shed as a kind o' pleasant surprise for Mary when she comes back."

"She your wife?"

"Sister."

"You don't live alone?"

"Lord, no; I ain't any sort o' a hermit." He seemed to be reading her thought. "I got a whole passel o' folks a mile down the road—father, an' mother, an' brothers, an' sisters."

"Then what makes you live 'way up here, just you an' your sister?"

"Love o' money." He broke into his dry chuckle. "My sawmill's up beyond there, an' I have to live handy so I can set the flashboards into the stream, or take 'em off, at a moment's notice. A mill's consid'ble like a baby, you can't leave it to jog 'long by itself."

He seemed ready enough to tell her about himself, but he offered no hint of a question concerning her affairs.

"Your sister like it up here?"

"Can't say she does," with candor. "You see, this is a lonesomish sort o' place—the nearest neighbor lives nigh a mile down the road—an' Mary's a great hand for company. But she's a good girl; she don't repine, an' she's a master good housekeeper."

The girl looked around the room, furnished with all the comforts of a long-ago kitchen, and shining with neatness, and nodded approval.

"She gone visitin'?"

"All my folks is off to Brother Jim's marryin' over to Zoar. They said if it come on to snow they should remain the week out. I stayed by the stuff, like the man in the Bible."

"Didn't you want to go, too?"

"Don't know as I did. A weddin's



R. Emmett Owen

After a long time—or did it only seem long?—she rounded the crag that thrust out over the road, and began to climb up again.

a pretty solemn performance, nigh as solemn as a funeral. When a fellow's dead—well, he's through his adventures, good or bad; but when he marries, he opens the door to any amount o' new difficulties. No, marryin's are too solemn to pleasure me."

"I got to go on to Pettipaug now," in a sharp cry, as if some nerve had thrilled suddenly.

"I wouldn't be in a collar pucker to get there to-night. Pettipaug ain't the kind o' a township that's liable to move off before mornin'."

"I'm obliged to get there to-night," she repeated steadily. "I'm expected by—some one."

"Well, he won't move off, either, will he?"

"I must go," with soft obstinacy.

"Sho, now, it's a stiff proposition to make it through to Pettipaug to-night for a team o' horses. Just folks afoot couldn't do it," he assured her, in his easy, unstressful drawl.

"Horses! I'll pay for them."

She hated herself for this after his hospitality, but needs must.

"The folks took both our teams. I ain't got a horse left."

"Then I'll walk."

She reached for her hat valiantly.

"Set right where you are; you ain't goin' to leave my house to-night."

He stood by the door half across the room, yet she had a sensation as if his hands had seated her in the chair.

Tears fringed her lashes; she swallowed on a sob.

"You listen to me," his hawk glance softening. "I reckon you've come over from the Junction, an' somehow you've got off on this back road, more'n five mile from Pettipaug. The trail ain't broke out, it's perishin' cold, an' after ten o'clock. One o' the other o' us would be froze stiff 'fore we got there."

"I'm afraid to stay here." Her voice shook with distress.

"What you 'fraid of—me?"

He crossed over beside her and bent on her a look, hard and sharp, yet somehow not alarming.

She lifted her eyes to his face; they were eyes so deeply blue and shaded by such long lashes that they looked dark, and their expression was a sweet candor.

"O' course I'm not afraid o' you." She laughed at his little jest. "But it's like this—I sent word I was a-comin' on from Millington Center by the stage, and when I don't come Ben—my—my friend—he'll be dreadful worried an' upset."

"He's give up expectin' you hours ago." He consulted a huge watch with a silver turnip face. "It's 'leven o'clock."

She stretched her hands to the fire; pretty, slender hands, not work-roughened.

"But I said I'd come, it's—it's important business." Her voice quivered on the words.

"I reckon he's got sense, ain't he? An' he'll know you're held up somewhere by this ol' blizzard." He seated himself on the other side of the stove, opposite her. "An' whether he's got sense or not, you're goin' to pass the night in Sis Mary's chamber off'n the keepin' room."

"Who says so?" with a sudden flash from her soft eyes.

Her host disdained direct reply, but smiled on her like a domineering, but kindly, big brother.

"Kind o' snug here, ain't it?" was his irrelevant answer.

The fire burned redly, the kettle steamed, the sleek cat, scared from her cushion by the bustle of the arrival, now curled herself into a ball on it again, her tail cozily over her nose to keep that warm; it was, indeed, snug.

"It's like my home when mother was in it," the girl murmured into the fire.

"How long is it since she—left?" He avoided the bitter word "died" with delicate sympathy.

"Six year."

Silence fell between them, warm and friendly. Suddenly the girl leaned forward, her hands tightly clasped in her lap, her breath coming fast. Upon her was that singular compulsion that, once in a lifetime, perhaps, drives the most reticent to open-hearted revelation to an entire stranger.

"My name's Comfort Prince. Folks mostly call me Cuppie," she cried abruptly, as a sort of prelude to her tale. "An' I'm twenty year ol'."

"An' mine's Martin Willets," he replied at once. "Mart for short. An' I'll be thirty-three if I make out to live till April."

Again silence, this time big with the gathering confession. Comfort stared into the fire as if she would draw out its red heart to heat her own. Martin studied her through narrow eyes, his expression inscrutable. She had a small, soft face under her cloud of yellow hair, and all her features—her little round nose, curved red lips, and deep-blue eyes—told of a nature sweet, and fond, and innocent. There was not a strongly cut line in the whole dimpled, rounded surface, yet, curiously, the face suggested reserves of courage and a soul of high resolve hidden somewhere in that gentle nature.

After a long moment Comfort began again, halting a little, yet unwinding her tale steadily:

"I live over to Millington Center,

with my sister. She's my stepsister, really, twenty year older'n I, but she's been real good to me always. Abby Jane ain't ha'sh really, in her nature, but she's plagued to death. She's got a shiftless hus'and, that won't work, an' a mean son that spends all his wages on his pleasures an' don't come home nights."

She was like one defending her sister against an inner adversary.

"You kind o' do chores an' help her out?" he prompted.

"Ephraim—that's her husband—keeps the tavern, but Abby Jane does all the work o' it, really. I'm clerk—I mean I was—to the general store. I keep the books an' wait on the women and children, an' like that."

"Kind o' young, ain't you, for such responsibility?"

"Oh, I been there since I was sixteen. Mr. Dawes—it's him that owns it—he's been kind to me, an' he always seemed to set by me. Folks are always good to me, I think."

"Queer in 'em!" A dry comment from the other side of the fire.

"But last week I was obliged to leave." She seemed not to heed the comment. "I had to." She cast this at him.

"Work too hard? Poor pay?"

"He broke the law."

"The law?" What should this pretty child know of law?

"Millington Center's a no-license town. There's places that vote to give men a license to sell whisky, an' places that don't," she explained, with care.

"I've voted on that issue, myself," he informed her amusedly.

"If Mr. Dawes had a-had a license, I'd never 'a' said a word, but he hadn't one. The law was again' it, yet he'd take men—an' young boys, too—right into his back room an' sell it to 'em. What you say to that?"

"Well, it ain't unheard of in other sections o' the world." His lean face crinkled into his sardonic smile.

"I warned him how I viewed it, breakin' the law o' the town, an' I told him I'd be obligated to resign, but I

reckon he didn't sense just how I felt over it. So a week ago I left."

"Without havin' any other place in view to work?"

"There ain't any other place. Millington Center ain't got but just the one store, an' the dressmaker has all the help she can use."

"Good Lord! I'd call that pretty near grit!"

"I couldn't countenance breakin' the law," simply.

"I deem Abby Jane carried on some when she learned o' your decision?" he questioned, his smile gone, his face queerly gentle.

"It was a Monday, an' the tavern was full o' folks, an' the baby was pretty." She stumbled the words out, her cheeks fiery hot. "She said she couldn't keep me for nothin'—you see, I'd been givin' her most o' my wages for board—an' I'd have to go to my gran'sire, in Maine. I couldn't do that, could I?" She appealed to him directly now, her blue eyes searching his face for approval.

"Course you couldn't," he backed her at once, in perfect ignorance of the facts.

"Gran'sire's ol' an' poor, an' he's got a second wife, who ain't my own gran'-ma, an' how I know I could get work up there? I was distressed all one night so I couldn't sleep." She covered her face with her hands swiftly. "But you mustn't set Abby Jane down as havin' a bad heart; she's just drove to the end o' her tether."

"What you do next?" ignoring the claims of Abby Jane upon his justice.

"I wrote Ben." Again the fire seemed to scorch her face.

"He is—"

"We've been tokened over a year—sixteen months an' four days," with love's precision, "an' I grew up next door to him. He went right off from Millington Center the next day after he spoke to me, to see if he couldn't get him a prosperous situation. I ain't seen him since, but we've written, oh, a great number o' letters, an' he begged an' beseeched me to wed him six months back, when he got him his good place in Middleton, an' then again when he

settled down in Pettipaug, two months ago."

"What this—fellow's—name?"

"Bennett Meldon. You know him?"

"Um—yes, I ain't well acquainted, but I've seen him some."

"Ain't it like him?" From some inner hiding place she drew out a small ambrotype, framed in a quaint gilt round.

Martin studied the picture, holding it away from her to the light. It was a face full of youthful fire and dash, and handsome in an extraordinary degree, but markedly weak and unreliable.

"Good likeness," he said briefly, handing it back.

"I wrote him yesterday I was comin' at last, an' I'd wed him like he begged me. I could stay with his mother—Ben's taken ol' Mis' Meldon round everywhere with him—till the banns was called, an' we'd all live right here together."

"You heard from him lately?" There was a careful casualness in his voice, but she did not note it.

"'Bout two weeks ago. Ben's a poor writer, but he's been real considerate o' my letters. I made my plans careful."

She said this with dignity that he might not fancy she went "traipsin' round" the country in this wild way because of shiftless improvidence.

"You lef' this mornin'?"

"There wasn't a grain o' snow when I started, but right away the storm began; an' the train was hours late, so 'twas night by the time I reached the Junction. But the storm was over then, an' the moon so bright I wasn't frightened. I waited for the stage to Pettipaug a long time. Finally, the station master said it wasn't comin', an' he'd got to lock up an' go home."

"That's Ezry Sessions all over! Disobligin' folks is the breath o' life to him."

"He was dreadful contrary," she conceded, with a long sigh for her past troubles. "Said nobody at the Junction could take me in for the night, an' urged me to walk over to Pettipaug.

Tol' me it wasn't more'n three miles. I guess he'd been misinformed."

"I guess he lied," grimly. "Well, now, all's well that ends well," more genially. "You go 'long to bed, an' early in the mornin' I'll get Johnny Flint, down the road a mile, to hitch up an' drive you over to Pettipaug."

He lighted a small lamp, and filled his arms with wood.

"Goin' to bresh up a little fire in Mary's room to take the chill off the air," he told her.

There came a thud against the door, and roaring voices.

"Oh!" cried Comfort, springing from her chair.

"The boys have got back from their little carouse," he told her, and flung open the door.

In tumbled two shaggy collie dogs, and rushed upon him with woofs of delight.

"Quit it, Colonel! Get down, Rattler!" He bluffed them away from his face, which they were trying in mighty bounds to lick. "They won't hurt you; clever boys as ever barked."

"I'm not frightened," she smiled, while she shrank a little from their lunges. "I just ain't acquainted with dogs."

"Well, you make friends while I hot up your room."

He opened the door into another room and shut it behind him.

For a few minutes the dogs rubbed against Comfort, pushing her with friendly roughness and thrusting their paws into her lap; then, with a swift change of manner, they ran to the door, whined, scratched, stiffened into rigid immobility. Unlearned in the ways of the animal world, she yet guessed a mystery somewhere, and, running to the window, pressed her face to the pane.

A grotesque shape, whether of man or of beast she could not tell, was dragging itself up from the gate, now rising to its feet, now lurching to its knees, now prone in the snow. The moon cast monstrous shadows of this creature across the white plain of the garden, like a giant, or a hobgoblin, or a dragon.



"Hello, sis," he said gibingly. "You there?"

Comfort opened the door by which Martin had vanished, disclosing a cold little passage. Beyond was the keeping room, shown, by the waver of light from the kitchen, to contain a tall clock, a highboy, and other essentials of that state apartment. She called timidly:

"Mr. Willets."

Martin, in some fastness beyond, was banging the wood about with cheerful clatter, and could not hear.

"Mr. Willets," more boldly.

No answer.

"Martin!" in a high distress.

The door flew open, and Martin's reassuring "Hello" answered her.

"There's a man tryin' to get in," she gasped.

Her host's serenity was unmoved.

"Kind o' seems as if this was my at-home night, as they tell about up to Boston," he drawled, striding before her into the kitchen.

He shut the dogs, now yelping fiercely, into the entry, and bolted out into the cold. Comfort snatched her



"Stop!" Comfort's voice quavered and broke, yet it rang out loud in the still room.

coat and followed. Quick as she was, Martin already had lifted the creature from the snow and was staggering under its weight into the house.

"Nigh all in," he panted, dropping his burden onto the old lounge. "Bring the light."

They stood together and looked down on a wreck of a man, ragged, dirty, unkempt, his face a dingy white, mottled red with broken veins, and his hair clot ted with fresh blood. The side of his head was battered with bruises, and an ooze of blood dripped with ugly steadiness over his forehead.

"Is he dead?" she breathed.
"Not much loss if he is."

Yet he was already pouring whisky down the man's throat, and rubbing his blackened, frozen hands in snow.

"Shall I wash his forehead?" anxious to help.

Martin shook his head.

"Best leave be a while. It looks bad, an' I'm afraid to make it worse."

He rubbed snow on the man's repulsive face, and gave him another drink of whisky. Slowly and dully, the man raised the lids over his bleared, brutal eyes, and spoke.

"That's somethin' like," in a thick voice.

"Oh, you're comin' round, all right," Martin assured him. "How'd you get that thump on the head?"

"'Gain' your gatepost," still in a dragging voice. "Saw the light, an' made for it, the cold kind o' got me, an' I—keeled over onto your cursed pickets."

"Too bad," remarked Martin coldly. He brought a basin of warm water and, on his knees by the lounge, began cautiously to wash away some of the blood on the matted hair.

"You're Bill Case, worked for me at my mill four year ago," he said casually, as he washed away the grime. "What you doin' here this time o' night?"

"Ain't, neither. Name's George Fisher," mumbled the man. "Never saw you before."

Martin shook his head, smilingly unconvinced.

"Must a' got you mixed up with some other chap," he conceded in words. He looked at the wound in the man's forehead, exposed now, and frowned at the deep, raw hole from which the blood dropped unceasingly.

Case tried to raise himself, turned a

sicker hue, and fell back with a groan, his eyes closed, his head sagging.

Martin gave him more whisky.

"I'm bad, I'm bad!" he groaned out, when he could speak.

"You are," succinctly. "That head o' yours is jammed consid'ble."

Martin frowned harder. He drew away into the shadows behind the stove, motioning Comfort to follow.

"We're in a kind o' clove hitch," he told her, in a lowered voice. "That Case—I recognize him plain as print—has got a jag in the head that'll do for him by mornin' if a doctor doesn't sew it up."

"Oh, can't we get the doctor?"

She clasped her hands over his arm appealingly.

"We might. There's a smart one to Pettipaug, an' there ain't the night made yet that can scare him. But how to reach him?"

"Oh, you get some horse down the road."

"I could roust out Johnny Flint a piece this side o' father's. He's got horses, an' he'll go if I tell him to, though he won't be anyways keen to. But I'll have to leave you 'lone here with that ol' pirate for half an hour or so."

Comfort straightened her slender shoulders. She was of middle height, but of so slim a fashion that she seemed small.

"I'll be all right. What's to hurt me? That poor thing can't."

Martin gazed over at the lounge where the man, sunken into a mere bundle of rags, groaned and muttered as if in fever.

"I'm better acquainted with Bill Case than what you are," he said sententiously, "an' there's not much I'd put a-past *him*. But he's safe 'nough now, at all events. Don't you give him a drop o' whisky, nor go near him, while I'm gone."

"S'pose he gets worse?"

"Let him die," sternly. "You give me your word you won't go near that hulk on the lounge till I'm back."

"Why—he's sick—an' hurt—an' I could give him a drink an' like

that—" She gazed up at him wonderingly.

Martin took both her hands in his, and held them hard.

"You give me your word o' honor you won't go near him, or I won't stir one step."

Soft eyes and hawk eyes met in a long look.

"I give it," she promised gently.

Martin walked over to the lounge, shot a searching glance down on the man, who now seemed in a stupor, and with the decision that marked all his acts, pulled on his hip boots, jerked into his heavy coat, tugged his cap well down over his ears, and strode out into the bitter cold. At the door he turned to her.

"I lef' the dogs shut in the entry," he whispered. "They're liable to rush at him an' do him a mischief. But if you need 'em, let 'em loose. They're stanch."

"I ain't goin' to need 'em," Comfort whispered back. She thought the man on the lounge a horrible sight, but she marveled at Martin's fear for her.

"Certain, you ain't," he drawled, in his old, un hurried way. "But—well—say—my gun's in the back shed, an' she's loaded with duck shot. Good-by." He was off at a floundering run through the snow.

Comfort seated herself in the old rocker by the stove, herself in shadow while the light of the lamp fell broadly on the man, asleep or in a coma, on the lounge against the wall. She turned her eyes from him, loath to dwell on any creature so repulsive. She wondered for an instant what press of business called him along that bleak road at dead of night; then her thoughts trailed away to her own fortunes.

Was Ben still waiting her, or off to bed in sorry disappointment? Her heart leaped as she pictured Ben, handsome, gallant, wonderful, a figure of faery in her meek world, running out to meet her sleigh in the morning. Then her brain, curiously alert now in her weary body, glided to her host. What a "reliable fashion o' man" this Martin Willets was. She had never felt

toward any one in the world as she did toward him after just this one hour's knowledge—except, perhaps, toward her mother, when she was a little girl—as if she could drop all her cares on him and he'd carry them off clean out of her way forever.

A little noise brought her head around quickly; the man was rising slowly from the lounge. He swayed, and the blood ran faster over his face, but he did not look by any means in so desperate a case as when Martin had watched him.

"Drink!" he told her hoarsely.

Comfort, quaking, she knew not why, stepped back quickly to the bucket of water. At the same time the man gave a great lurch over to the entry door. At the new sounds in the kitchen, the dogs barked clamorously. The man snapped the lock around, dropped the key into some inner pocket, and, clutching at the wall, managed to reach the lounge again.

"Them brutes won't count now," he muttered, as he fell back on his pillow.

Comfort stared across the length of the kitchen in a trembling amazement. That he should lock up the dogs did not alarm her, their nearness might have worked ominously in his fevered brain; but what did he mean by "don't count now"? What dark game was he playing in which already he had won a stroke?

Like a hideous answer came a faint tip-tap at the door, so light that it might have been a lilac bush brushed by the wind—only the night was windless. The tramp on the lounge heard it, too.

"Come in," he called, in a weak and broken cry.

The door was pushed cautiously in; there entered another man. Comfort, at the apex of a triangle of which the door and the lounge formed each an end of the base, stood perfectly quiet, her heart dead within her, her breath stifled in her lungs. Never, in all her safe and careful life, had she faced real peril, and the strangeness of it struck her numb. The newcomer was much younger than the other tramp, better

clothed, cleaner, and with a face neither scarred nor drunken. For an instant the quivering girl fancied him a refuge from the horror on the lounge, but one look at his bleak eyes and lipless mouth struck cold fear to her bones.

"Where's Willetts?" he asked.

"Gone for the doctor—for me," panted the other. "Look alive—he'll be back."

"That's luck! The dogs?" For their raging filled the room.

"I locked 'em in. Hurry!"

His breath labored raspingly, the blood smeared his face.

"Where's he keep it?"

"Used to hide—it behind the chimney. Caught him doin' it—once." Each word was a struggle now. "Got big pay for a haul—o' logs yesterday."

"I know all that," curtly. He walked over to the chimney and began to finger each brick, the other tramp rubbing the blood from his eyes to watch him.

All this time Comfort had not made a sound, pressed against the wall, her arms spread out flat each side of her. Neither man paid the smallest heed to her. She realized that these two were here in Martin's house of set plan to rob him, and that his absence was an aid that they had not expected. How, then, had they meant to get his money? A hideous answer ran like a thread of ice through her body.

The man uttered an oath of satisfaction. "Here 'tis!" He threw up his hand, grasping a thick leather bag. He pulled the string and peered inside. "A roll thick as your arm!"

"Stop!" Comfort's voice quavered and broke, yet it rang out loud in the still room. "Leave his money alone!"

The younger tramp looked at her over his shoulder without troubling to turn his body.

"Hello, sis," he said gibingly. "You here?"

Comfort could not speak again, the sound of her own voice, like a call in the high Alps, had precipitated upon her an avalanche of whelming terror.

"Don't mind her, she don't count," urged the other man, and again it was

as if he had won a point. "Got a horse?"

"Outside, an' the sleigh. Ef I haul you 'long, can you make out to reach it?"

"Got to. How 'bout her?"

The young tramp turned toward Comfort.

"You girl there!" His tone went through her with a jar. "You move from that wall an' I'll gouge your eyes out with my hands." He curved his taloned fingers at her like a vulture.

The dogs, whose yelping had filled the kitchen with noise, suddenly ceased, then burst into an exultant clamor of welcome.

"Hark!" The tramp on the lounge held up a warning hand.

Comfort heard now what the dogs' finer ears had caught a full minute before—the crunch of the snow under trampling feet.

"Willetts' back!" whispered the older man.

"Let him!"

The other man swept from his pocket a long sheath knife with a gleaming, murderous blade. He stepped to one side of the door, so that, when Martin should open it, he would be behind it, ready to spring upon his back.

"He got a gun?" he syllabled to the other.

Case pointed over the entry door, where hung a long, blue-barreled rifle.

"When he opens the door, out with the lamp," went on the man with the knife. "He'll be in the moonlight."

He slunk against the wall, the other stretched his hand, shaking, but determined, toward the lamp on the table close to his head. They waited, still as stones, only their breath whistling thinly in their throats. The dogs were whining softly. In the hush, the tramp of Martin's boots on the crust sounded loud and clear. Comfort felt that this cruel, wild scene could not be really in her eyes; it must be part of an agonizing dream from which she would wake up in her little bed under the clean patchwork quilt, with the sun smiling in through the dormer window. Such

things could not happen in Pettipaug township, not five miles from the meetinghouse. She pressed hard against the wall, in a stupor of terror.

Martin drew nearer, and on that a mist lifted from her brain. They were going to murder him, Martin, who had been so kind to her, who had, it might be, saved her from a piteous death in the snow; and she knew their plan and did nothing. The younger tramp's last word echoed in her ears. The gun! There it hung over the door. Yet Martin had said that it was in the woodshed, loaded, and Martin seemed one not to make mistakes. Her flattened right hand slipped over the latch of the shed door, turned it, and slid it open. Behind was the darkness of the woodshed, into which a thin ray from the lamp slanted a vague twilight. She moved her head against the panel of the door till, out of the corner of her eyes, she could see into the motley contents of the rough interior. Something glinted in the light. She strained her eyes till the sockets seemed to crack, and prayed with a frenzy of importunity. Yet if she could find the gun, what could she do with it, she who did not know butt from muzzle? And could she shoot at a living creature, a fellow human being?

The latch rattled in Martin's fingers, stuck, rose awkwardly, and stuck again.

Comfort thrust her arms fiercely into the gloom of the shed, snatched at a long something—stick, or scythe, or what, she knew not—slid her fingers down a strange, chill surface, threw up one end against her shoulder as in a whirling picture of memory she recalled seeing Ben do when target shooting, and fumbled with shaking fingers for the obscure mechanism that set loose death.

The door opened with a strong jerk. "Comfort?" a voice called. She pointed across the room and snapped the trigger. The lamp went out.

The room roared to the report. The air was foul with powder. Some one shouted. Another voice cursed savagely. A heavy body fell. She herself



She pointed across the room and snapped the trigger.

went over backward onto a heap of soft pine chips.

In an instant she was up again, fear driving out fear, as fire, fire. In the darkness she heard the fierce strain and struggle of men wrestling on the floor, groans, threats, curses. The dogs raged in their prison. The confusion was appalling.

"Look out for his knife, Mart!" she shrieked.

No one answered. The struggle writhed its way across the floor from the threshold to the wall. In the moonlight she could now make out the two men locked in a clenched hold, but she could not see which was Martin to help him. She could not remember the position of the lamp, or plan how to leap over the men to reach it, yet even now Martin might be murdered there in her sight.

As she agonized by the door, clutching the latch for support, a tall figure struggled to his feet, and came to her.

"Comfort, you safe?" Martin asked,

and, after the welter of sound and violence, his voice sounded amazingly cool. "You hurt?" he repeated, and put his arm around her strongly.

"What's happened to them?" She leaned into his arms tremblingly.

"Killed, I hope. I'll get a light."

He lighted two candles, still holding her in an iron grasp, and in the yellow gleam of the tallow they gazed about the room. The older tramp lay face downward across the end of the lounge; the other was stretched on his back, his face the color of the candles, his jaw twisted awry, his arms extended starkly as if he were crucified. Martin, his hair wet with blood, a raking cut along his cheek, stirred the man on the floor with his foot.

"He's out o' business for a while," he muttered sternly. "I broke his jaw with my fist. Come!"

His tone had changed to gentleness. He put a candle into Comfort's hand, and, without another word, carried her out of the kitchen, across the keeping

room, and into his sister's little warm bedroom.

"There, I got you out o' that shambles." He laid her on the bed, with its white-knitted spread, and drew over her a quilt. "You hurt you anywhere?"

His voice broke, and the hand straightening the quilt shook so that the fingers would not close. Comfort felt sick and silly, and like a baby.

"My shoulder aches," she complained childishly.

The man smiled as he might on a little girl hurt in sliding.

"That's the ol' gun; she kicks like all possessed." He touched her shoulder lightly, in a hurried, almost furtive way.

"What will you do?" The question quivered from her, tears smarted in her eyes, she was suddenly all a-tremble.

"Oh, Johnny an' doc'll be 'long now. I found him at ol' Aunt Milly Treadway's down the road; she'd had a turn. But I clipt it back to look out for you."

"Those men?"

"The first was sick 'nough when I went out, an' I settled the other."

"He was goin' to murder you. Oh! Oh!" She covered her face with her shaking hands.

"An' you let drive at him with the gun an' blew a hole in his knife arm. You're a trump an' grit to the bone!"

His voice, too, trembled queerly. He took one of her hands between both his, wrung it crushingly, then dropped it as if it burned him, saying cheerfully:

"Now you lie right here, quiet. I'll be back soon."

When the door closed upon him, Comfort turned her face into the pillow and cried heartily, because she was a woman and had just played her part like a hero. Presently she slept, utterly worn out, her curling hair loose on the pillow, and one hand closed against her breast.

The little room was gay with sunshine when she opened her eyes. Beyond the window she could see a wonderful world of glistening white, rimmed by somber forests of pine and

hemlock. She stared about her in a daze, slowly unwinding the long day just passed, beginning with her start from Millington Center and ending at the battle with the tramps.

She sprang up startled, for it must be on to noon. What would Ben imagine had happened? She was stiff from her long journey in the snow, and had the crumpled and awry feeling of all night in her clothes, but otherwise she was unharmed. She bathed, put on fresh clothes from her bag, and went out into the kitchen.

The room looked as tranquil as if the master vices of greed and murder had never drawn their dark figures through its homely warmth. The dogs slept by the fire, the cat was washing its face in the sun, and by the window, comfortable in slippers and old coat, Martin Willets was reading the county paper. He was washed, and brushed, and shaved, and in the cleanest of linen, and his lank cheeks, colorless hair, and queer features looked less odd than in the night.

"Good mornin'. How's the little lady?" he greeted her.

Comfort laughed out gayly. Was this not the day she was to meet Ben?

"I'm feelin' fine. How are you?"

"Fine, myself." He shook her hand up and down.

"Weren't you hurt at all last night?"

"Samuel Hines, his mark." He laid a finger on his cheek, barred with a long red cut.

"Oh!" shuddered Comfort. "Where are they?" She flung a fearful glance over her shoulder.

"You eat a good breakfast. Then I'll tell you all there is to it."

When she had eaten the excellent meal he cooked her, he drew his chair beside hers and said in his easy, unstressful drawl:

"You see, your gun flash showed up things to me—Bill Case at the lamp, and Hines with his knife layin' for me. You hit him in the right arm. Pretty scat-terin' shot it was, but it crippled him 'nough so he went down on his knees, grabbin' me as he fell. He made a pass at my throat with his knife, but his aim

was spoiled by your shot, an' he just sliced my cheek. I knocked the knife clean out o' his hand—his grip was weak, your work again, that was—an' we rolled all over the floor, tryin' for a clinch."

"I heard. It was awful in the dark!"

"Must have been bad to listen to, not knowin' how things were goin'. It was consid'ble lively, wrastlin' round up again' table legs an' substances like that, but he wasn't up to my fightin' strength with both his arms to serve him, an' with the main quantity o' blood he lost— Pshaw! It's an ugly business; no need to go into particulars. I laid him out."

"He might have killed you." Her eyes, soft, and troubled, and tender, caressed him.

Martin's own glance sought the floor.

"So he might, only for you an' your little ol' gun," he said soberly.

"Then?" she prompted.

"Oh, then"—his thoughts came back from some remote land, not peopled by tramps, for he had been smiling happily—"Johnnie an' doc showed up. Doc's our coroner, an' he sat on the trial then an' there. Case was dead; he'd give his head a wrench when he tried to take a hand in the row, an' the cut in it wouldn't allow that. Don't you grieve for him, my friend. I hired him in my mill a few years back, an' he was the meanest an' lowest skunk I ever struck. We run him out o' the country."

"How did he an' the other man happen to be together?"

"'Twas all mapped out neat between 'em yesterday. They'd been loafin' round the country together, an' they was to the Junction hangin' round day before yesterday, when I sold my last cut o' logs. The fellow bought 'em came from the city, an' he thought I was such a country jay I wouldn't take a check, so he gave me cash."

"How did you find out 'bout their plan?"

"Hines confessed. He was a pretty sick tramp for a while here, an' he thought he was goin' to cash in, so he opened out to doc. Both o' 'em was

holin' up in a shack beyond Book Hill. Case was to come ahead an' get me kind o' fixed up where I'd do the least harm. Then the other fellow was to cut in, finish me up, an' both was to clear out with the rocks. Pretty, warn't it?" He laughed grimly, then his look softened to her white face and startled eyes. "You view it Pettipaug's a hard ol' place, eh?"

Comfort flushed exquisitely in tribute to his guess, yet shook her head stoutly, although all she found to say was a soft "No." How could she make him understand that every turn in this last round of the sun since she had stepped onto the train at Millington Center had brought events to her so wild that they were all the phantasmagoria of a dream, not to be subjected to any of the tests of actuality?

"I was born right down the road there," Martin went on, with a sweep of his hand beyond his shoulder, "an' father an' gran'father were born there, too, an' I never heard o' such a go-round as last night's, not since the British burned the ropewalk. Why, folks leave their silver spoons a-settin' right spang out on the table, an' clip it off for a month with the key lyin' under the front-door mat, an' all's safe as a bank."

He spoke with unusual energy, as if touched for the good name of the town.

"That tramp was truly hurt when he got here," she prompted him. "That wasn't any trick?"

"Certain he was. 'Best-laid plans o' mice an' men,' you know. 'Twas some farther over Book Hill than what he looked for, an' a whole sight colder, an' he was consid'ble well 'long toward freezin' when he fell onto my picket fence. Then I played right into their hands, settin' off for doc. Queer! I couldn't see how in thunderation that hunk on the lounge could put up any game on you, an' yet I had an awful sinkin' to leave you 'lone with him. That's why I spoke out 'bout the ol' shotgun."

He fell a-musing upon the mystery of the touch upon the spirit from some other world, beyond eyes, and ears, and

hands, beyond reason itself, yet existent out of all dispute.

"If you hadn't come back!" shuddered Comfort, and for a moment the sun seemed darkened with blood.

"Oh, I was a-comin' fast as my legs could crank." He gave her a long, deep look, his voice sounded husky. "I steamed right through the door, an' nothin' short o' a miracle from Heaven could 'a' saved me from six inches o' cold steel in my back. Your shot—I guess that *was* a miracle from Heaven."

"I remembered Ben said once, 'Pull the trigger,' so I braced the gun again, my shoulder an' pulled on everythin' I could feel. I didn't aim."

"You nicked his right arm, an' pitched him onto his knees 'fore he could so much as figure out what got him. I deem I'm a livin' man this mornin', an' not in my shroud, because you had a mighty wit an' courage."

He took a turn about the room, coming back to stand by her chair, his hand on the back.

"If there's anythin' I can do—but there ain't—or any help you ever need, now or fifty year from now, in work or money—or friendship—why—"

His voice, rough and broken, failed entirely; he thrust out a long, sinewy hand, a pledge of fidelity. Comfort laid her little, soft one in it.

"You been so good to me!" she murmured, and caught her breath for the iron twist he'd given her fingers.

Martin held the slim palm in a lax clasp, his face dull and set, then walked abruptly to the window, pushing aside the white curtain to look out.

"It ain't such a terr'ble pretty day, after all," he remarked at length, quite casually, as if the aspects of the weather on Sawmill Hill were his one concern. "I guess you an' Johnny'd better jog on to town 'fore more snow flies."

Little ripples of rose color flowed over Comfort's cheeks like a summer breeze on a lake, her eyes glowed starily, she laughed like a child so full of delight that mirth is a medium of pure joy. At last she should see Ben! All her troubles would be over!

It seemed only a moment till she was trotting briskly through the snow behind Martin's long slouch, to the Flint farm, and only another till she was tucked away beneath bearskins in Johnny's sleigh, his big horses dancing to be off.

"Good-by, Martin Willetts. You been so good, an' friendly, an' neighborly I shan't ever forget it. Why, you seem just like my own folks," she told Martin, with sweet emphasis, while Johnny hunted his whip in the barn.

"You saved my life." It was his simple thanks.

"Don't you ever come down to Pettipaug? Me an' Ben, we'd set everythin' by it if you'd make us a visit." Already she felt herself mistress of a snug house in the village.

Martin bent over her feet to tuck in the robe more firmly, his face was hidden thus, his voice half lost:

"I have to stick pretty tol'ble close to the ol' mill; she's cranky. Father or the girls do my tradin' for me. Thank you just as much. But if ever you want anythin'—*anythin'*, mind—you just come to me. Remember!"

"I will remember."

She held out her hand, lost in one of the huge mittens he had loaned her, but just that moment the horses jerked forward, so that he had to pull them in with both hands. Then Johnny thudded down from the barn, and they were off in a jangle of bells and a whirl of snow sparks. She looked back over her shoulder to wave to Martin, but he was swinging up the hill, head down, shoulders bent. She thought of him for quite ten minutes, with a kind of wonder; he was so different from any man of her experience.

She seemed to have known him always, in a queer, sweet intimacy, and to be able to trust him with every secret of her heart. Why, even toward Ben—flashing, splendid, miraculous Ben—she didn't have just that sense of long-tried fidelity. Yet, had they ever exchanged ten words upon any questions of taste or opinion? Queer, how you *felt* people without words! Sad, too, that to gain the magnificent prizes of

life one must always cast away some lesser possession. Why couldn't she have Ben and Martin both, husband and brother? At that, visions of Ben began to dance and gleam before her eyes; all dimmer values were outblazed in that glory.

Back at home, Martin Willetts set himself to chopping wood sturdily, but he found the ax dull, and flung it down. He began to mend his harness, but decided that he needed new leather for it, and cast it aside. So, all day, he wandered from one task to another, leaving each unfinished. A strange fire burned in his bones, driving out all rest and peace.

"Mart Willetts, ol' fool!" he admonished himself in a savagery foreign to his usual cheerful irony. "What you reckon you'll make by mullin' over what's all gone by?" Then he would make a furious onset upon the barn and pitchfork the hay about.

At noon he scanned the sun, disappearing fast under vast gray banks of cloud. "Snow, or I'm a Dutchman! Well, they've got to Pettipaug by now."

Night drew in swiftly, with fine, thin flakes, steady, persistent. He swept his kitchen, shoveled out a path to the gate, and fed his fire royally.

"My folks won't resk startin' in this storm," he told himself.

He opened the door and peered down the darkling road, the dogs crowding up to him whimperingly.

"What's wrong, boys?" he asked them. But they could not tell him their thoughts.

The last of daylight lay in a thin beam by the window ledge, where he had been reading the paper fitfully.

"I ain't got gumption 'nough to hold on to my wits," he scoffed at himself, yet he left his chair, pulled on his boots, and put on his overcoat. "I'm possessed till I get out onto that road."

The wind had risen all afternoon. Now it keened around the house woefully, rising every now and then to a wild shriek that echoed among the hills. He leaned his back against the gusts, stout like a barn door, and they pushed

him down the road at a clip. Halfway to Johnny Flint's house he stopped. Should he make a neighborly call on the cheerful tribe of Flint the end of this fool's expedition? He shielded his eyes under his mitten from the penetrating snow. Surely something small and wavering was beating a way up the hill. His heart jerked almost clear of his body, he ran like a deer.

"Comfort!" he shouted above the storm. "I'm comin'!"

She lifted to him a face wild and piteous. Her cheeks were blue with cold, tears frozen to ice fringed her lashes. She looked beaten, yet desperate; heartbroken, yet as if she could not understand the source of her grief.

"I've come back to you, Martin," she said, like a helpless child, and swayed against his shoulder.

Martin wound his arm around her waist, and, wordless, began the struggle up the hill against the wind. Often Comfort stumbled; once, in spite of the iron arm around her, she fell to her knees. At that he stood away from her, bending his back double.

"Come, get on!" he ordered.

She clasped her arms around his neck, he held her by her ankles, and so they plowed up the hill. It was neither picturesque nor heroic to view—a man bowed grotesquely to dwarfish size, staggering, hitting his knees together, a woman huddled on his back—yet all the elements of a noble saga were there found—dire need, endurance, strength, self-sacrifice.

Panting, gasping, streaming with sweat, Martin reached his warm kitchen at last, and laid her down on the lounge. He pulled that close to the fire, and drew off her wet outer garments, much as he had done the night before; only now she did not help him or speak one word, a figure spent, broken.

He cooked her supper, and she ate a little because he begged her to. After that she lay staring into the glow of the stove while the dogs licked her limply hanging hands. And Martin sat in the rocker, hid in the shadows, his face savage and pitiful by turns.

At last she spoke, in a faint, toneless



"Comfort!" he shouted above the storm. "I'm comin'!"

voice, like one sick a long while, and slow, quiet tears ran unceasingly over her cheeks.

"I hadn't any place to go but just to you."

Martin swallowed over something.

"That's right. I told you to come."

"I started to walk from Pettipaug, but a man overtook me an' gave me a ride to the crossroads."

"Sho, now, wonder who he was." As if he cared!

"It was awful work climbin' the hill. I thought maybe I'd lie down in the snow an' die."

"It's come out all right, for you're here safe an' snug now."

"He wasn't home, Ben, wasn't; he'd gone away."

Martin knotted his fists in the shadows.

"His mother was in the house, though, an' she had a letter written for me. I got it here." She fumbled slackly in her bosom.

"Where'd he gone?"

"She didn't know. He got my letter sayin' I was comin' yesterday mornin', an' he just went right away, leavin' the letter for me."

"Must have been awful drivin' business took him!"

"It wasn't any business. Read that." She held an envelope toward him in a shaking hand.

"Guess I don't feel to read it, Cuppie." The little name seemed to slip out unawares.

"Please, I want you should." Her languid voice quivered.

Martin read the note slowly twice. It was a poor scrawl, written by a poor creature.

DEAR LITTLE CUPPIE: I did prize you, I was honest when I told you. But it's more'n a year since I saw you, and I been round a good deal since then and seen many folks. And here in Pettipaug there's a girl, her name's Nettie Stow. She's a widow, but real young. You think I'm a mean scamp of a fellow. I am! I am! Forgive me, Cuppie,

you was always sweet and loving even to that crossgrained sister of yours. I love Nettie, so I shall die if I can't wed her. She's promised to go anywhere with me. We'll take the train this afternoon. Mother'll give you this. I don't make any excuse. I'm a wicked man, and I'll suffer for it, but I got to have Nettie. You forget there ever was such a miserable, treacherous fellow as this worthless

BEN MELDON.

Martin folded the paper with extreme care and placed it in an inner pocket.

"I saw him round with her one day last week. She's pretty notorious." He remarked it with the same precision with which he had treated the letter.

"Is she a widow?" faintly.

"Oh, I guess she's that straight 'nough, an' I don't view it she killed the late departed, either."

Comfort was swept away from all further interest in this unknown woman, as a great wave of her own agony flooded her again.

"Ben an' me we've been tokened, you might say, since we were children. He made me a ring out o' sweet grass once—I got it still—an' when he put it on my finger, we pledged each other, for always." She covered her poor, stained face with her hands, and swayed to and fro waveringly.

Martin strode out into the path of light from the cheerful lamp. "Don't!" he cried, his voice startlingly loud.

Comfort dropped her hands and showed him again her tears, channeling a scarlet path down her cheeks.

"Why, if it would 'a' made Ben happy, I'd 'a' died for him an' been glad to," she told him, in piteous abandon of all reserve. "An' now he don't prize me any more!"

An oath, furious, savage, sprang from Martin's lips, his lean, brown face flushed darkly, his blue eyes glowed red-rimmed. Comfort might well have marked this change in her cool host as sufficiently notable even in that day of wild events.

"He don't prize me any more," she grieved again, like a child that must tell its hurt over and over.

Martin's long stride carried him up and down the room, knocking into ta-

bles, treading on the dogs, in a clumsy disregard as new as all the rest of his ways to-night.

Comfort sat on the edge of the lounge now, her skirt twisted all awry, her collar loosened, her hair hanging around her face, a creature of forlorn dishevelment. What did she care? To-morrow—if there was to be a to-morrow—she'd have to be trig and calm, and shut tight up from the world to her own despair; to-night only she would be her naked, wretched self. To-morrow? Yes, and the to-morrow after that, and the next to-morrow, and the next—and forever. Dear God, *how* could she drag herself through the uncounted years of to-morrows, and *where*?

Then, indeed, her desolation burned in on her spirit, like fire on the flesh. She had understood—dimly, it may be—that she had no lover any more; now she grasped the dread knowledge that she had no home. An exceeding bitter cry broke from her:

"Abby Jane don't want me, gran'sire don't want me, I haven't any place in all the world to go."

She sprang up, her tears scorched dry by terror, her eyes wild with the fear of a wood creature trailed by the dogs.

Martin was beside her, seating her with compelling hands. Then he drew a chair opposite her, so close that his knees touched hers. He took her hand between both of his. Even her abstraction heeded how cold they were, and how his fingers trembled. His voice, slow and gentle, like that used to the sick, first soothed her with its slow kindness, then reached that part of her weary brain that was still capable of comprehension.

"You maybe heard, Cuppie"—again the little name—"o' what folks call love at first sight, an' maybe you've laughed some over it, for that's what I've done time an' again, myself. I always deemed love had got to be built up slow on the solid foundation o' respect an' understandin' o' character, an' all like that. Well, I guess I don't know all there is to know in the world, if I am risin' thirty-three."

He kept turning her hand back and forth in his palms and watching it intently, never once lifting his eyes to her face. Comfort, on her part, stared at him in a kind of listless daze. "When I opened the door last night," he went on, with his tender gravity, "not able to guess who the Ol' Farrago had come long at that hour in such a frost, an' when I looked down into your beautiful eyes—I fell deep in love with you, right then."

He said the mighty word that no repetition can ever make commonplace, the word so wonderful and mysterious in its content that some dwellers in Pettipaug can never bring themselves to speak it, as the Jews of old dared not say the most holy name of God. He uttered it with tranquil reverence, as a priest commissioned to handle the Sacrament.

Comfort stared the harder.

"Maybe you marked how I took you right in like I'd been expectin' you; an' so I had, a-waitin' for you all my life, only I was so numb I never got it into my head that was why I never wanted to wed like other fellows. I could 'a' snatched you up into my arms there on the doorsill 'fore ever you spoke a word, an' been the best-pleased man in Pettipaug."

A gasp for his tale escaped her now; she murmured something indistinguishable.

"It ain't accordin' to experience, it ain't accordin' to reason, likely; but what's facts an' sense again' an almighty rush o' instinct like that? Might as well tell the blind man in the Bible it weren't reasonable for him to be healed o' his blindness by just some one sayin' a few words to him. He could *see*—what he care 'bout the rest o' it? I wanted you for my wife that moment. I ain't a fellow that's ever been took up with girls. I don't know as I ever paid court to a girl in my whole life, though I've met up with plenty, an' some o' 'em handsomer in the face an' more competent lookin', too."

Something like the poor, dim ghost of humor wandered by Comfort at the

convincing honesty of this appraisement of her values.

"I didn't give a hang where you came from or where you were bound for; I just was so pleased to see you a-settin' by my fire, like you belonged to me. I built a good few castles in Spain last night, an' your face was at every window o' 'em. Then you tol' me 'bout that Ben."

"Don't!" as if he had struck her.

"If it had been any other fellow! But him! The poorest tool in Pettipaug, shiftless, don't pay his bills, light o' fancy with every girl he—"

"Oh, stop, stop!" She implored mercy for her love, if he could not give it to her lover.

His voice grew more tenderly compassionate. "I won't. He ain't worth the powder an' shot. I gave you right up, though it hurt—well, you know that pain. After that, things piled up on top o' each other so terr'ble swift I hadn't time to think o' anythin'. You stood by me like a little soldier in that tramp row, a man couldn't 'a' been braver. It didn't make me prize you any more—I couldn't do that, I loved you all there was in me already—but it showed me I wasn't fooled in you. You got a great, warm, brave heart that a man can lean right on."

He whispered the last words huskily. Leaning over, he drew the strands of her soft hair through his fingers, then lifted them to his lips. "Little dearie!" he murmured caressingly.

Comfort mused in all this strangeness.

"I was drawn to you from the very first," she told him, with her quaint candor. "I'm wont to be real shy with strangers, but right off you seemed just like my own folks—like mother."

"There," alertly, "it was meant so. Sweetheart, you wed me right now?" Each word came with soft care not to startle; he even dropped her hands.

"An' then go back to Abby Jane's or gran'sire's?" She considered this with simplicity—as a business proposition.

Martin permitted himself a faint smile. "You little dear thing! No, you'd have a home right here with me,

an' cook my dinners, an' bake my bread."

His voice dwelt on the homely words, typical, as bread has always been, of the common, deep needs of life.

"Couldn't I keep house for you without weddin'? Mary Ann Ball does for ol' Cap'n Peters, in Millington, an' she's one o' my mates." She offered this compromise in all seriousness.

Martin's smile broadened. "I ain't acquainted with Mary Ann or the cap'n, but I am with Pettipaug. It couldn't be done, dear. Weddin' me is the only way o' it."

"But I don't feel to you like you do to me." She said the cruel words calmly.

He winced. "I understand."

"I set by Ben still, just as much as ever I did. I don't care what he's done to me!" The passionate cry of the heart that will not let love leave it empty.

Again he answered: "I understand."

"I ain't got any place to go." It was as if she were in tragic argument with herself and weighed now *pro*, now *con*.

"Don't you go, then; just stay right here, in this good, warm house. I'm consid'ble of a prosperous man, Comfort, an' my folks have stood well in this community—since back to Revolutionary days. Folks—Elder Card or doctor—will give me a name for honest dealin' an' sober livin'."

"Oh, yes," in an acceptance of these values as already sure.

"I'll work for you, an' take care o' you, an' love you—oh, Cuppie, like no woman was ever loved before!"

He stood up, no longer able to hold himself quiet, and drew her, pale and dim, up beside him. She was not short, yet she looked so by his lean length.

"Just one little word o' consent, dear," he begged, his face bent down into the tangle of her hair.

In the silence she heard the wind howl at the door and shake the latch, a dash of snow beat at the pane; within, she saw the low, kind room, with the ruddy stove and the row of flowering plants on the sill. Her heart sickened with fear of the storms and cold of the

world, which seemed now always winter, and of the wolf that prowls hard on the path of the friendless girl. This man—good, and kind, and infinitely understanding—wanted her; his happiness was to have her with him, even though her spirit be dead within her. Here was something yet for her to do with her broken heart.

"If you want me that way—" She said it drearily as one who accepts defeat as the only refuge.

He caught her in a crushing hold. His body trembled. His heart beat surgingly against her breast. His kiss on her cheek burned it. Never once had Ben done like that. He released her, tears, not hers, shining on his face.

"Now, off you go to your little bed." His tone was a prosaic drawl. "You're beat out. Come mornin', I'll drive you over to the Pond Meadow Road to my Aunt Sally Loomis. She's one o' the best souls the Lord ever created, an' she'll be like an own mother to you. She won't be took a-back to see us, Great King, no! Aunt Sally's so eager to be doin' somethin' for somebody, she ain't ever got time to be surprised. Then I'll fetch Elder Card from Pettipaug—he's another one o' those good creatures—an' we'll be wedded man an' wife by another sundown."

For a long time Comfort lay in the clean little bed that belonged to Martin's sister, too fagged to weep, too fagged even to grieve much. Sometimes her bruised mind toiled after memories, cruelly sweet memories of days with Ben, sometimes wondered at Martin's devotion; yet the last picture before her dozing eyes was of the stanch old farm in a hollow of the hills, and the warm room golden with winter sunshine.

Every little happening stood out in Comfort's memory always, plain as an old rhyme; curious changes unwound themselves for her vision, as if she were a spectator at a play, with no power over them. She saw, painted in her brain, the low-roofed, deep-eaved old farmhouse, set all askew on the cross-roads, cold-shouldering the passer-by

with its doorless side; Uncle Zeke, huge, and ruddy, and jovial; Aunt Sally, an eager brown twig of a creature, so keen upon kind offices that she could not find time to laugh; Elder Card, with silvery hair, and eyes as innocent and as wise as an angel's.

She was impressed with the contention over what she should wear. Martin would not allow the white dress prepared for that other marriage, and she could not bring herself "to stand up bride" in the draggled one in which she had experienced her many adventures; so she put on a worn little frock, scant and out of date, even by Pettipaug standards, but of the clear and skyey blue in which long-ago artists loved to paint the Virgin. Her hair shone like thread-of-gold in the morning light, her face was as white as Aunt Sally's calla lily, and her slim feet stood straight and close in a tiny pool of sunshine. She made every response in a low, calm voice, and wondered, in some dim place of thought, to hear Martin's words broken and tremulous.

Then it was all over, and they were away again in the blaze of the winter noon, their horses plowing through the drifts with lively jangle of bells, they themselves silent. After a long time, Martin spoke:

"That's the Junction, yonder," pointing with his whip into the valley.

"Yes." Was it years since she had seen it last?

"I'm takin' you there," to spur her dull attention.

"Yes," in a breath, but this time she did turn her eyes to him.

"I'm a-goin' to buy you a ticket off to Maine, where your gran'sire lives, an' here's some money to pay your way among your folks." He closed her lax fingers over a great roll of bills.

"Don't you want I should keep house for you?" she asked him, in a voice of faint wonder.

Martin's hands on the reins jerked sharply. "Lord A'mighty!" he cried, under his breath, then coolly: "I want you should give you a good visit first. You've been pully-hauled without mercy this long time, an' you've got to

have rest. I want you to promise me one thing, Comfort." He leaned over her, his eyes searching her. "Promise."

Her weary, dazed face yet found for him a smile of heavenly candor.

"Whatever 'tis, I promise, dear."

He cringed at the caress, so void of meaning in her dull voice.

"You'll stay till I send for you, but you'll come back to me the minute I give the word."

"I will," like a vow.

They were at the station next, with time for only hurried directions for the journey, and arrangements for a weekly letter. Comfort gave him her little cold hand. She longed to say something grateful, something due to the occasion. Why, she was Martin's wife! But her poor mind was swept bare of even the simplest ideas. She lifted her face, pinched and blue with the cold, to his.

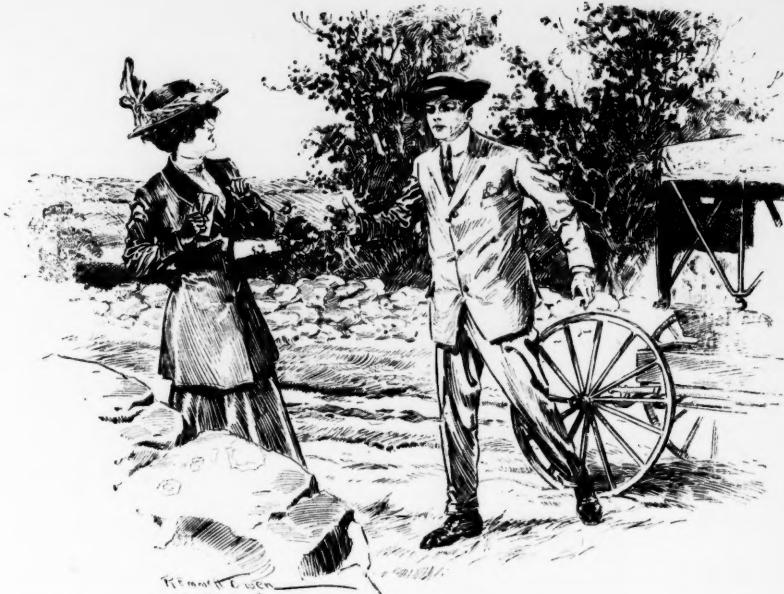
"Don't you want to kiss me good-by, Martin?" She could not even be shy in this dream of living, where nothing was real or counted.

Martin laid his cheek down against hers, the muscles twitching in his neck.

"Poor little girl, my poor little girl!" he whispered hoarsely, and his kiss on her lips was like a mother's.

Comfort watched him till the train rounded the bend, standing on the platform, tall, solitary, sad-faced. A stab of feeling pierced the glaze coating her heart. She was lonely and afraid, and for a moment she wished burningly that she had not been so pliant about being sent away to her relatives, but had asked instead to stay with him. That passed. She was again an apathetic little creature huddled in the corner of her seat and staring vacantly at the snow-clad landscape gliding by.

Winter was breaking up early this year, April still to come, and already the air was sweet with the breath of spring, and the redwings were calling in the marshes. The land had been beaten upon by raving tempests, twisted by iron frosts, but now those ancient wrongs were overpast; young spring was flying up the valleys with shining feet.



"Comfort"—he had found words now—"you tell me how you found out I was here? Did you follow me to Clearwater?"

Comfort Willets—she signed the name with an effort—was coming back from the village of Bridge Farms to her grandfather's house. The western sky was crocus-colored; day still thrust a sword of light through the grays and browns of the pastures. She loitered along the meadow path that ran close under the sweet fern and bayberry bushes, drawing in the elusive perfume of the dawning year, glancing about for any secret sign in grass or tree. She was still cypress slender, in the old Greek phrase, and her blue eyes, under their deep fringes, were grave, yet her face was tranquil rather than sad, it might even dimple into laughter.

The months at her grandfather's farm had given her a long, still rest, the first her hard young life had known. Her kinsfolk were kindly, and, since she paid her way generously, asked no services of her, but left her to drowse away the days in a warm corner by the

fire, or to roam about the austere beautiful country. Her young body, for years on a keen strain, quieted into wholesome peace, a safe shelter for her fevered spirit. When she reached the farm, she had expected to die in a week of a broken heart, yet, in a few months, she was a much sought playboy for some young cousins in their winter sports.

Martin wrote once a week loyally, dry letters, serving up his news in a few succinct sentences. She answered in long, self-revealing pages, for, undreamed of either, she had the artistic temperament and the yearning for expression. All her days, calm farm events, changes and chances of the season, the moods that played through her spirit, all went into that weekly letter—for did not Martin always understand?

She had a missive from him now, which she balanced in her hand as she

leaned against the gap in the stone fence that bounded the back pastures, wondering if this one, at last, would ask her to come back. Certainly Martin couldn't mean that she was to live 'way up here always, to the scandal of folks in Bridge Farms and in Pettipaug alike; yet she'd stay away till crack o' Judgment before she'd ever hint that her place was back there with him. She didn't love Martin, but once he had said that he felt that way toward her, and with all her grateful heart she meant to be a good wife to him.

This letter was just like all the rest, friendly, humorous, and brief. He sent her a generous sum of money, to buy a spring bonnet, he said; that was the most personal note. Comfort sighed and frowned, and sighed again, and crossed the gap into the highroad, beyond which lay her grandfather's farm. In the dusk she could make out a horse and wagon, and she stopped to let them pass. A man in the wagon called out in a bold, gay voice:

"This the right road to Mr. Joshua Dillworth's?"

Comfort stood in the road, cold as a stone, still as a statue.

The man leaned over the wheel.

"Say, miss, am I headed for Deacon Dillworth's?"

Still she did not seem to hear.

He leaped to the ground, the reins dangling over his arm.

"I kind o' guess I'm lost," he said pleasantly. "I'm a stranger in these parts— My Lord! Comfort Prince! You!" He could say no more.

She fended him from her with wildly beating hands.

"Comfort"—he had found words now—"you tell me how you found out I was here? Did you follow me to Clearwater?"

Goaded that he should dream she had sought him, she spoke at last, in precise words from a heart throbbing with excitement:

"I live to Bridge Farms, with my gran'sire."

Ben swore futilely. "Cuppie, I call it grand! Up here in a new place, where not a soul ever set eyes on us, we

can begin all over again. I'm free, Cuppie." His handsome face burned hotly, his head drooped. "She jilted me, Nettie did; she was a heartless piece through an' through. She made me take her to her sister's an' wait a while 'fore I married her. An' then come long an ol' flame o' hers, rollin' in money, an' she flung me off like an' ol' coat. You see I ain't bound. We weren't wedded, ever."

"You let me by!" she ordered him chokingly.

"I treated you meaner 'n an Injin squaw, dear." His voice was softly imploring, a silver voice with a song in it. "But I been paid out for it, like I said I'd be, an' I always set by you more'n my eyes. I was just toled off by her."

She stared at him, horror growing upon her dumbly. "How you get 'way up here?" The foolish question came without thought. As if it mattered!

"Why, I got an uncle over there to Clearwater." A wave of his hand in the dusk. "You knew that long ago. Him an' your gran'sire was mates at school."

She knew it; indeed, that had been the first bond between them away back in their childhood in Millington Center. "You let me go!" She repeated it like a lesson to a harsh schoolmaster.

"Cuppie, can't you forgive me?" he besought her, in his compelling voice. He took her hand.

She shuddered away from him. "Don't! Don't!" Both her hands covered her face now.

"What stands between us, dear, say?" He drew down her hands and bent his face to hers.

She had only to say, "My husband." Why didn't she? She wanted Ben to understand that no reason outside herself, but only her own, her free will, kept her from him. She gathered all her meek powers to flout him:

"My shame in you stands between us, Ben, an' my own self-respect. You let me go."

"I can't, darlin'; I got to make you see it my way."

With a sound like a tormented ani-

mal, she thrust him away from her and ran, swift with terror, across the road to the pasture beyond. Lights twinkled in her grandfather's farmhouse; the hired man was calling in the dogs. The sounds steadied her with a sense of help near, her flight dropped to a walk. She heard the horse and wagon roll away.

Half the night she lay in her bed, down to which a brilliant star rode on a long beam of light, and suffered as if that first awful week of Ben's desertion were upon her again. Yet this night was different—she reached that by and by—for now she no longer loved Ben. She had thought that her love was immortal, yet here in a few months— It was not his cruelty, or his treason to her, that had worked the change; it was, surprisingly, his way about it to-night, as if broken vows and broken hearts were petty hurts to be patched up by a few vehement words. Her own nature, simple and tender, but leal to the bone, and with the Psalmist's solemn obligation to the word that shall not go forth in vain, had sickened at the levity of his spirit, the shallowness of his character. He could not even be true in his treason! She burned with shame to have loved such a man.

Then shivering racked her, a cold fear of Ben's power over her. He would come back. She knew that lightly dogged nature of his in pursuit. She would be allured, bewitched by him into loving him again; she, pledged another man's wife! She was caught in a snare; how could she flee? She built up little cities of refuge for her days; they crumbled before the laughter in Ben's eyes. Tell him she was already wedded? *That* would only whet him on in keener chase.

Her hot eyes followed the star beam up to the cool white constellation in the sky. That star was shining in just that remote, indifferent way in far-off Pettipaug. Could Martin see it? Did he know with what eyes of anguish she watched it?

Slowly there formed in the star, very faint and nebulous, the vision of the gray old farmhouse, as she had seen it

that never-to-be-forgotten night, when, cold, and spent, and lost, she had stumbled to its door, guided by the light from its window stretched out to her like a welcoming hand across the bleak waste.

In that good old home were food, and warmth, and shelter for any comer, even for the robber that betrayed its kindness. And there, in the very heart of all its helpfulness, she saw the master of the house, alone, perhaps, except for his dogs, tired, likely, from a rough day at the mill, sad, it might be, with the strange withholding of joy from his life, but now—as then, as always—instant to protect and to console. She saw her husband, Martin Willetts, in a gleam of light, shining with good will to all.

She would go to Martin; in his safe, kind shelter, no malign influence could touch her. She leaped out of bed, lighted a candle, and wrote with trembling fingers that blotted the words:

DEAR MARTIN: Ben is here. I am afraid.
Let me come home. COMFORT.

Then she curled herself down in her pillow and slept, one hand extended as if Martin's strong grasp were holding it.

Day was ending, mild and damp, and overhung with black clouds. Comfort hunted all about the Junction forlornly for any sign of Martin; then, with enterprise, engaged a farmer going to Sawmill Road to drive her over. It was certainly queer that Martin hadn't come. She opened his letter to make sure that she was right in her time. There it was, curt as her own:

DEAR COMFORT: Will meet you at four-thirty train Saturday. Yours,
MARTIN WILLETTES.

She had started at daylight, she was tired and hungry, and she trembled at this absence of his as at an evil omen. The farmer lifted her and her trunk down at the gate, and, leaving both to their own devices, drove off down the road. She hurried up the path, knocked at the kitchen door, and, after a moment's hesitation, stepped in. The room

was just as she remembered it, bright, and warm, and exquisitely in order, the pans shining behind the stove, the flowers blooming on the window sill. She drew in her breath quickly as it came over her that this was her *home*.

"Martin!" she called timidly at first, then loudly, "Martin! Where are you?"

Only the echo of her voice answered her. She ran out to the barn. Two young horses, hitched to a light wagon, and tied to a ring in the wall, stamped impatiently, ready for their driver. Where was that driver? Again she called, but quaveringly, so that the sound dropped futile to the ground. She could not stand the creeping shadows, full of eyes, that looked out of the corners of the barn. She ran out into the melancholy daylight again. What was that sound? A dog's long call. Somewhere the "boys" were hunting. Where they were he might be, at least they would be something that she once had known. She followed the intermittent sound, first with uncertain, then with flying, feet, up a wood path to where, clear and searching, she heard it from behind the doors of the mill.

She stopped short, her breath coming in gasps. What was inside that dark and ancient mill? Dared she open its heavy door? She pushed it ajar cautiously. With a yelp the dogs sprang out upon her, hurling her against the wall; then, when her voice, calling their names, quieted them, they ran back into the mill, whining. Comfort followed them fearfully.

The sun drifted out from behind a cloud for a last pale good night to the world. In that light she saw Martin stretched out on the floor, his eyes closed, and a great stain of blood across his white shirt. His body was motionless, his limbs relaxed, his expression remote and calm. So look the dead, always. Comfort pressed her hands over her eyes to shut out the awful sight, and in the darkness made thus, time gone and to come flashed in a crazed dance before her.

For days she had been looking to Martin as a shelter from her terrors,

from herself. Now Martin was dead, and it was not fresh terror that swept her like a black tide, but sorrow for Martin himself. In her amazement at that grief, she almost forgot the grief itself. She had planned the calm and contented years with Martin, whose dry voice and twinkling eyes would praise her care of him, and all her plans had ended thus! What were Ben and his bewitchments to her now? She despised them and him. The man she truly loved, had loved since the night he had lifted her over his threshold, was dead before her. Love pierced her with a thousand bitter thrusts, love crushed her with a weight of tons. It seemed that she, too, must die of the monstrous irony of it—to have found out her love only when it was too late to live for it.

How petty she seemed to herself as she stared fixedly at the tranquil figure lying before her! She had married him for a shelter; she had left him when another was offered her; she had fled back to him when that other proved defenseless. She had thought of him only for what he could do for her, for what he could give her. And he? He had given all that a man has, to the last drop of the secret of his heart, that he might be to her a covert from the storm.

What must she have seemed to him? A creature so frail that she must be shielded even by a stranger, so cowardly that she could not guard her own honor without his aid! She cast that thought from her. She scorned herself with a mordant contempt, but she knew that Martin had never harbored any save the gentlest deference for her. And he would never know that she, also, loved; no longer like a helpless, poor child, whose high tide of affection is a sense of safe dependence upon beneficent power, but like a woman, rich in her own right, who yearns to pour out upon the feet of her loved one her box of very precious ointment.

She stole across the floor and knelt down by his side. She could not touch his hand, even; a shyness never with her in his living presence bound her

now. She had kept herself aloof from him then; now she had no rights in him. She gazed at him, deep understanding dawning in her that this new love that quivered in every channel of her blood was not born in this hour of the shock of his death, but had been growing slowly in the dark through the quiet, lonely months.

She spoke aloud in a grieving wonder, her voice as sad as water dripping from the eaves:

"You are dead, dear, an' I never had a chance to tell you how I'd learned to love you."

His eyelids lifted slowly, and in the eyes beneath a flicker of laughter played:

"Ain't got shut o' me—quick as all—that," he said, in a breath of sound.

Comfort clasped his cold hand in hers, crying in terror:

"Oh, Martin, are you dyin'?"

"Got your head set on my demise, ain't you? I ain't—goin' to quit—this mortal frame for—years an'—years yet." He smiled at her, though his lips were blue.

"What happened to you?" Her eyes, dark with anxiety, searched out his hurt.

"It's my left arm, by the shoulder," answering her look. "I was ready to go meet you an' came here to start the mill." Each word was an effort, he moistened his lips to go on.

"An'—" she urged.

"After fifteen year o' millin'—got ketched—by my own saw. Tell you—some time. I thought o' Rattler was goin' to jump—too near, so I—." He closed his eyes.

Comfort ran to the flume, tore off her white underskirt, and soaked it in the water. With it she bathed his face and hands, and squeezed a few drops into his mouth.

"Feel better?" For his eyes had opened again.

"Like a fightin' cock. It don't bleed now. It's only a slash, anyhow."

"I'll get help for you." She bathed his face again.

"Guess you'd better. You're a little trump! I said that was what was

wrong with you, didn't I? Saved my life twice."

Comfort had taken off her jacket, folded it into a pillow, and slipped it under his head.

"There, that's sort o' nice. You lie real still. I'll drive down to your father's." She smiled reassuringly at him.

"You comp'tent to drive a span?"

"I never drove so much as one horse in my whole life"—with her charming candor—"but I ain't a mite afraid."

"Bet you ain't, but I am. Those are valuable horses, an' I can't get a team like 'em in a hurry."

Comfort drew up close beside him and laid her hand on his hair.

"An' you can hunt up a wife any day?" she murmured.

"Don't have to hunt 'em. My first wife came right to my own door after me." His dry accents showed his returning powers. "It's better than the doctor to see you, know that?"

"But I'm goin' for the doctor just the same."

"Mind you walk, now. I ain't in any collar pucker. Waited one hour, can another."

Comfort brushed his hair from his forehead softly.

"See here, 'fore you go—how 'bout that—fellow?"

Red flowed in a flood over her face, but she answered clearly.

"Let's not think o' him or speak o' him ever again, dear," she pleaded. "He don't fill even the least place in my life any more. He went clear out o' it when I saw you lyin' there, dead, as I thought."

"I'm a'mighty glad I had an opportunity to hear your views o' me while I'm here in the body. Likely I'd never 'a' known 'em if I hadn't scared 'em out o' you. Put your face down close."

Her soft hair was in a cloud about him, her breath warm on his neck. He reached his sound arm up around her neck, and drew her cheek against his.

"I got to tell you; I'd writ for you to come home afore ever I got your letter. I couldn't stand it another day without you, my little dear."

THE HEART OF the UNTEMPTED LOUISE DRISCOLL



Author of "And Mary Ellen Sang," "The Late Mrs. William Rankin," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

MISS ABBY GREYSON was good with the thoroughness of one who has seldom known temptation. Upon her austere sense had never dawned the roseate allurements of the primrose path. Deacon Greyson's daughter was no beauty to begin with, and a quite unrecognized envy early led her into a sharpness of speech and manner that repelled advances of friendliness. As she saw other little girls, with softer manners, win for themselves small cavaliers as they began to take their places in the village life, she hated them, for some reason that she could not have defined. To Abby, whose hair was straight and scanty, Mabel Whitman's abundant curls were vanity alone, and she never dreamed that it was her own hurt vanity that made the suggestion.

So she drew her own sled up the hill and made vinegary retorts to the boys who teased her. Mabel, whose hair was quite wickedly long and lovely, replied to the same sallies with dimples and shy eyelashes dropped upon rosy cheeks, so the offender would change his tone.

"Aw—I didn't mean it," said Johnny Davison once within Abby's hearing.

Abby paused long enough to hear Mabel reply softly, "I know you didn't," and then Abby's hard little heart ached as she saw Johnny Davison take the rope of Mabel's sled in his own red-mitten hand, and help Mabel drag it up the hill. After a little while Mabel let other children take her sled, and slid

contentedly the rest of the winter with Johnny Davison.

Abby was a lonely child, who did not understand her own loneliness. She became a lonely woman at last, and acidly virtuous, like some cleansing agency that is dangerous to handle in quantity. She had only one weak spot in her heart, and that was for her younger brother, William. If Miss Abby Greyson were capable of idolatry, William would have been the object of her adoration. He was so much younger that when their father and mother died, William fell quite naturally into her care. He was a handsome, charming boy, who won favor easily, and never seemed to offend any one. Miss Abby always said that he never gave her any trouble. He was the one person in the world, people said, who could have found it possible to live with Miss Abby Greyson. He had a manner that suggested deference. He listened gently to all his sister's advice and admonition, and if he were ever bored by it, Miss Abby never knew it. He sang in the choir as soon as he was old enough, and when he made the soprano giggle during the sermon time, it was the soprano who was criticized. Miss Abby thought her quite inexcusable.

Miss Abby scrimped, and pinched, and saved, and even broke the sacred commandment that forbids touching principal, to get together money enough to send William to college. He was a fairly good student, quick-witted, and

of a retentive memory. Miss Abby was very proud of him. She made disparaging comparisons with all the other young men in the village, and gave advice to the mothers. She wrote long letters to William, full of good advice, and she guarded him carefully against any blandishment on the part of the young women at Jones Corners. Miss Abby sincerely believed that every unmarried female who looked upon William straightway began to plot to get him into her clutches.

And William was light-hearted, gay, and ease-loving. He avoided any appearance of crossing his sister's will. He was not at home much during his college years, and he seemed to accept Miss Abby's plan, which was that he should make a fortune at once, after leaving college, and so reward all her

care of him. She and William were to live together always, Miss Abby planned. So far as it was possible to her unimaginative mind, Miss Abby dreamed about this future, and William's death was a great shock to her.

He was killed in an automobile accident when the car in which he was speeding with some other young men came upon another car and tragedy en-



When he made the soprano giggle during the sermon time, it was the soprano who was criticized.

sued. Miss Abby was very sure that William had not been to blame, for she had often warned him about reckless driving, and she thought that he had listened to her. Be that as it may, William was dead without having made the fortune on which she had counted, and Miss Abby found that, for a time at any rate, she must practice stricter economy than ever. So when Mrs. Lemuel Wilson came to her and wanted to hire two rooms in her little house, she was quite pleased, until she found for whom they were wanted. Miss Abby recoiled when she heard Nina Preston's name, Nina Preston, whose sad story all the Corners knew. Mrs. Wilson was interested in Nina and the little fatherless boy, and sorry as only a good mother can be.

"I've got to do something for her," Mrs. Wilson explained. "I can't sleep for thinking of her. She is in better health now, but so frail and sad. She does beautiful sewing, and I'm going to get some work for her."

Miss Abby knew that if Mrs. Lemuel Wilson undertook to get work for Nina Preston, she would get it. "They all follow her like a flock of sheep," meditated Miss Abby grimly, as she considered the folk at Jones Corners and Mrs. Lemuel Wilson.

"I keep thinking—what if it were my Minnie!" said Mrs. Wilson tenderly. But Miss Abby spoke of Nina's misfortune in biblical terms.

Miss Abby, however, was in need of the money, and she did not really wish to offend Mrs. Wilson, so she prepared the rooms scantly. "And good enough for the likes of her," she thought rebelliously. It seemed a hardship to Miss Abby Greyson that she should have to prepare rooms for Nina Preston.

Mrs. Wilson brought Nina and the baby, such a pretty baby, only a few months old, and all unconscious of its own mistake in having been born at all. "Such a pity it lived!" said Miss Abby Greyson.

The mother was delicately beautiful, with a weary grace, heartbroken and heartbreaking to other eyes than Miss Abby's. She had a tiny income, but

needed more, and took the sewing gladly. She slipped into the two bare rooms and hid there, seldom obtruding upon Miss Abby's presence, and then apologetically. Miss Abby's bearing never relaxed, and always reminded the girl of her sin. Miss Abby never asked about the baby. Miss Abby was a little careful what she said to Mrs. Wilson, being human, after all, in the face of acknowledged position and prosperity, but to others Miss Abby sometimes spoke her mind.

"Pretty times, I call it," said Miss Abby, "when Christians are putting themselves out to make up to that—" and Miss Abby used the biblical term. She had her own interpretation of Christianity.

"Has she ever told who the father is?" she once asked Mrs. Wilson, overcome by a natural curiosity into an unwanted show of interest.

"Never," said Mrs. Wilson; "but she won't hear anything said against him. When she says anything at all, she says that she loves him."

Miss Abby snorted.

"I always think," said Mrs. Wilson again, "what if it were my little girl—Minnie's the same age, and she seems such a child."

"Your child isn't that kind," said Miss Abby sharply. She was annoyed by Mrs. Wilson's weakness. She had more than once seen tears in Mrs. Wilson's eyes when they spoke of Nina. "I'd like to see any man come to me and—"

Mrs. Wilson's eyes were fixed on Miss Abby's face, and Miss Abby saw something in them that checked her speech. Mrs. Wilson did not mean her to see it. The thought flashed upon one mind and was transferred, as thought is carried sometimes. Miss Abby saw her own gaunt, unattractive figure and hard features for an instant, as in a mirror.

"Oh, I know I never was any beauty!" she exclaimed, in bitter self-defense. "Like Nina Preston! And maybe it's just as well. But I can't make it seem right and fair—I can't!"



She came abruptly, without any ceremony of knocking or asking admission.

She came back to her own grief, centered upon her own affairs. Mrs. Wilson listened quietly. "It isn't fair," said Miss Abby Greyson, "that that creature should live and William die. He was so beautiful and good——" She cried out her protest against the decree and choice of death. "I can't hardly go to church," she confessed.

Mrs. Wilson allowed the subject of their conversation to be changed thus abruptly, and she talked with Miss Abby about William, and listened, and made those futile efforts at comfort that we offer in the face of the unchangeable.

One day Mrs. Wilson brought Nina's baby in to see Miss Abby, hoping that he might distract her with his cunning baby ways, but Miss Abby was unmovable, and Mrs. Wilson took the baby back to his mother, who received him with caresses that made up to him for his lack of welcome.

Nina sewed beautifully, and Mrs. Wilson kept her supplied with work, but Nina grew weaker instead of stronger, as the weeks passed, and in the fall she died, succumbing to an attack of pneumonia, so the baby was left without

either father or mother. There he was, a perfectly helpless bit of humanity, thrown on a world that neither asked nor wanted him, perfectly irresponsible, left for some one's care. Mrs. Wilson took him home with her for a time, but did not feel that she could keep him. She worried a good deal about him, for she hated to give him into the care of an institution, and there seemed no one to take him.

"He's such a dear baby," she said one day to Mrs. Wyndam, who was the minister's wife. "He can't help himself. It does seem as if the dear Lord ought to do something for him."

They were conferring about it when Miss Abby Greyson came in. She came abruptly, without any ceremony of knocking or asking admission. She had a small package in one hand, which the other women soon saw was made up of a few letters carelessly tied together.

"Do you know what these are?" she asked, and she held them up before the astonished women.

Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Wyndam were both startled by her face and manner. Her face was stained with tears,

and her hat was loosely placed on her head, so that it slipped out of place as she moved. Her shawl was wrapped indifferently about her.

"I went into those rooms," she said, "putting them to rights again, you know, and I looked into the table drawer—" Miss Abby's face worked convulsively, and she forced herself to speak. "I found these letters," she said. "They are from William—to Nina Preston. My brother—Oh, I know—I know—"

The two women stood and looked at her without speaking.

"I know what she never told," said Miss Abby. "That is William's child. My brother's child! And I brought him up. I couldn't teach him any better than that—and I thought I knew—and I said—I said such things of her!"

Mrs. Wyndam was young and inexperienced, and she did not know Miss Abby Greyson as well as Mrs. Wilson did, so, in her innocence, she did the right thing, which Mrs. Wilson

not have dared to do. She put her arms around Miss Abby Greyson and kissed her.

"Aren't you glad," she asked, "that you have a chance to make it all right?" and she lifted the baby in her arms and held him out to Miss Greyson.

"I'm not fit," said Miss Abby; "I failed once."

"Try again," said Mrs. Wyndam cheerfully.

"I can't tell her I know," faltered Miss Abby.

"She knows," said the minister's wife confidently, "and she's so glad that her baby is safe."

She put the boy in Miss Abby's arms. He had always been a good baby, and now he only cooed a little with the soft, ineffectual attempt at talking that babies make. Miss Abby's lean arms tightened about him.

"I think," she said slowly—she was trying to express all she had felt since the letters had come into her hands—"I think—maybe—it'll do me good."



Witch Tapers

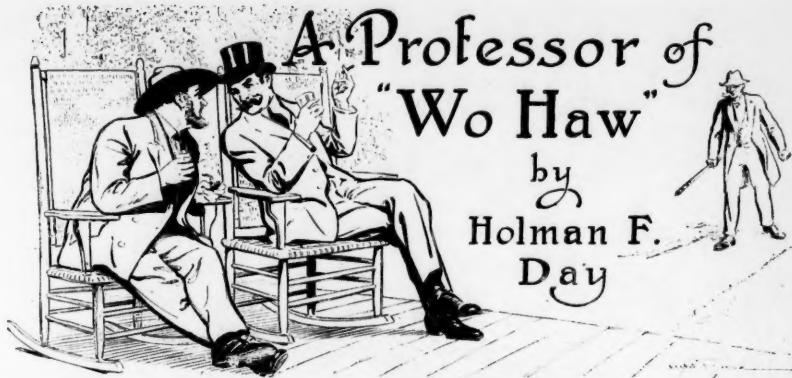
CLOSE by the moss of the moorland wall
That borders the heath from the sleeping town,
Witch tapers, kindled, are flaring tall,
And glimmering pale o'er the whin-spread down,

Dim mullein tapers, with moon fire drest,
Where witch moths hover on wide, gray wings,
And night winds circle the heathered crest,
And the air hangs heavy with whisperings.

Wild faces leered through the shadowed night,
And an old Hope pressed to my saddlebow,
With face upturned in the shimmered light,
While a dead voice summoned me, clear and low.

A Memory clutched at my mantle's fold,
And I felt the lips of an old Desire,
As I spurred to the rim of the dawn's far gold
That quenched the curse of the witches' fire.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

HIRAM LOOK scowled when that stranger stamped into the yard. It was into Cap'n Aaron Sprout's yard that he stamped.

The cap'n and Hiram were ensconced cozily behind the vines on the cap'n's porch, snuffing the August scents, sipping iced, long drinks of much-diluted pineapple rum, and the cap'n was running full-and-by in a mighty interesting yarn. It had to do with a halt in a harbor in the old, old days of the South Sea Islands, before the natives had been spoiled by visitors—when the cap'n was a cabin boy.

"There were pretty nigh twenty of them girls that swum out to the ship, Hiram, almost before her killick was hooked into the coral reef. I had red hair in them days and wore a red shirt, and I reckon I took their eye, because they yanked wreaths of flowers off'm their heads and waved them at me and motioned me to jump over the side and swim ashore—and ashore was waving the coconut palms, and so I—"

It was at that moment that the gate slammed viciously behind some person who came stamping into the yard—and Hiram scowled.

There are persons who can approach two gentlemen absorbed in a tasty narrative, and by obsequiousness can disarm resentment.

There are men who can butt in, and

can be so apologetic about it that they are forgiven as intruders.

But this stranger, on whom Hiram scowled, bristled with cockiness and extended assurance.

He was "high-and-wide-gaited," as they say of horses, and he slapped down his feet quite as if he owned the ground upon which he trod. He held his chin on one side and perked it up, and side whiskers, twisted almost into horns, set off his face. He carried a huge goad stick that was circled with many brass ferrules and had a long brad in the end.

He advanced to the porch and banged the butt of the goad stick against a post, most rudely interrupting the cap'n just as he had got to the place where he was to state whether or not he jumped overboard.

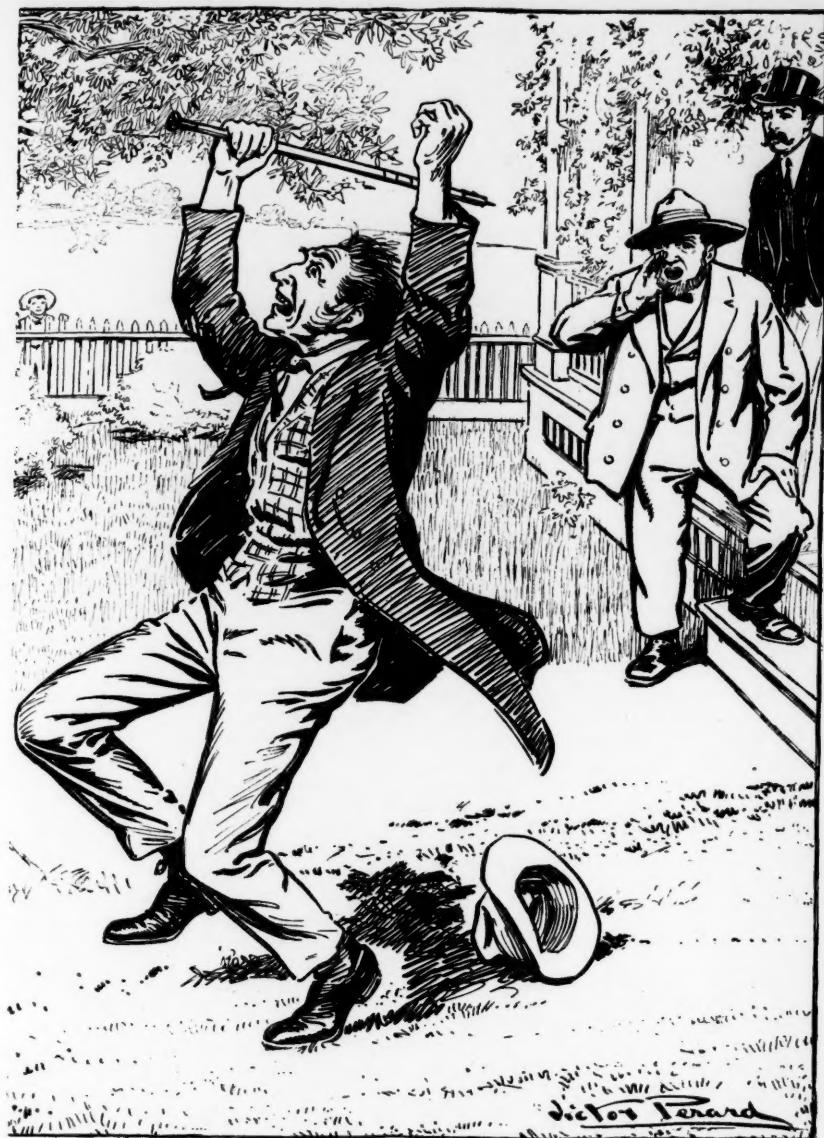
"My name is Dominicus Treadwell," announced the stranger, after he had beaten the goad stick against the post. "Official title is: 'The Champion Ox Teamster, Maneuvrer, and Handler in the World.' Please note medals."

Mr. Treadwell slapped open his coat and displayed a row of assorted badges. His tone was full of crisp hauteur, and he divided a patronizing gaze between the two on the porch.

"Any particular and well-known reason for thinking that we're a pair of Hereford steers and have advertised for somebody to come along and team us?"



The professor of ox teaming proceeded to wind up in a riot of vocal calisthenics, jumped two feet in the head with



air, yelled "Wo Haw!" with all the power of his lungs, and then slatted the perspiration from his forehead.

inquired Cap'n Sproul, displaying no especial cordiality.

"I have come here because you are a leading citizen of this town, and ought to appreciate high talent when you see it. And I am glad to find another leading citizen here with you. I like to be indorsed by leading citizens when I arrive in a town."

Mr. Treadwell waved his goad around his head.

"I don't expect to be indorsed until after I have demonstrated. Kindly bend your gaze on yonder tree. Give me the benefit of your imagination for a few moments. I have here four oxen hitched to the same trace chain—so your imagination will inform you, gents—and the trace chain is hitched to a wagon loaded with three tons of hay. I will now proceed to haul that hay around this tree, cutting a sharp corner, and will back it up to your porch—using one pair of the oxen for the backing part."

He waited neither for encouragement nor refusal. He grasped the goad stick by the butt; swished it in a wide arc through the air, and yelled, "Wo hysh!" Then, backing in front of the imaginary oxen, he started in on this exordium:

"Wo haw, there, Star! Gee up there, Bright! Wo haw! Wo hysh! Wo—wo—wo—wohysh! Jam meller your old tripes, you toggle-horned sons of the little brown bull of the mountains, tighten that trace chain! Swing that cart tongue, there, you swivel-tailed, platter-eyed hunks of rump steak! Waw buck!"

The Champion Ox Teamster of the Wide World had a voice. He did not spare it. It rose and swelled in crescendo like a riotous siren whistle. He raved, he shrieked, he leaped off the ground and beat the air with the big stick. Every time he yelled "Wo hysh!" sound burst from him like an explosion from a mortar.

Passers-by in the highway stopped and came to the fence that surrounded Cap'n Sproul's domains, and leaned on the pickets and stared their amazement. Men who were busy in distant gardens and fields straightened up from their

toil, listened, and began to flock in the direction of this uproar.

Cap'n Sproul, after he had exchanged decidedly pregnant looks with his friend, Hiram, arose and came down the steps of the porch.

He put up his hand and tried to shout remonstrance to this professor of the fine art of ox teaming, but Mr. Treadwell was beyond the stage of listening. His lips were frothing, his eyes were popping, he was leaping about like a madman. He cut, thrust, and slashed with his stick as if he were a fencing master gone out of his head; the baton of a crazy musician could not have described more fantastic circles; the flail of a lunatic farmer would have been in repose in comparison.

Twice Cap'n Sproul, advancing to stop this preposterous show in his front yard, heard the warning whish of the stick close to his head, and escaped only by ducking.

"Get away from him," advised Hiram. "If he ever clips you on the nut, you're a goner."

Mr. Treadwell was now wholly absorbed in swinging his imaginary oxen around the tree. He let out a few more links in his robust voice, and various persons as far away as Scotaze village began to perk up their ears and wonder what all this tumult of shouting was about. The early arrivals from the surrounding fields were now coming up on the run and gasping inquiries as to what it all meant. One moment, peace and sweet silence, broken only by the hum of bees in the vines, and the drone of the cap'n's narrative! Now, the next moment, the ear-splitting, hullabaloo that was arousing the neighborhood! Cap'n Sproul pulled up his sleeves and muttered remarks to himself, and endeavored to find an avenue by which he might close in on this tempestuous disturber of the peace—but Mr. Treadwell's stick whirled so briskly that he seemed to be the hub of a swiftly revolving wheel. The cap'n was daunted, and went back up the steps of his porch.

Professor Treadwell proceeded to turn the fourth sharp corner in his circuit of the tree. He emitted a series of

"Wups" that would have barked down the voice of a husky Gatling gun. There was now a faint response from the far distance in the direction of the village. It sounded something like an echo, but it wasn't. Somebody had shouted, "Fiah!"

In moments of stress—in moments of excitement when nobody knows just what the excitement is about, there is always some impulsive soul to yell "Fire!" on guesswork—subject to correction or corroboration. It starts something tangible, that cry of "Fire!" It crystallizes the fog of uncertainty into something definite. There may not be any fire, of course, but there is prompt excuse for action.

Others in the village took up the fire cry. Then, clang! clang! clang! the bell in the union meetinghouse began its alarm.

"By the eternal hot-tar kittles of Tophet!" roared the cap'n from his porch. "You stop that kydingo in my front yard, you brass-faced son of a Sebascodegan foghorn, or I'll come down there and mallyhack the infernal daylight out of you! Stop it, I say! Run down the road, somebody, and tell 'em to stop ringing that bell. There ain't no fire!"

But no one in the gathering crowd elected to leave the spectacle afforded by the impassioned Mr. Treadwell, who was attending strictly to business. Even if he heard Cap'n Sproul above the tumult of his own shouting, he paid not the least attention to that gentleman's threats.

"Heely's a-coming!" squealed a voice. A cloud of dust signaled the rush up the hill of Scotaze's ancient hand tub.

"They might as well come along, now that they've got started," bawled another spectator. "I reckon they'll be called on to play the hose onto that gad-stick feller or onto Cap'n Sproul—one or t'other of 'em."

The professor of ox teaming proceeded to wind up in a riot of vocal calisthenics, jumped two feet in the air, yelled "Whoa!" with all the power of his lungs, banged his stick against the porch post with a violence that made

the cap'n leap backward, and then sputtered the perspiration from his forehead with his finger.

"You can see now, gents, why I wear medals," he observed proudly. "If I'd have known that I was going to have so big an audience, I would have made the team six imaginary oxen, and would have had the load five tons of granite. I could have got in a lot of fine touches that you miss when there are only four oxen. You see—"

Sudden tumult in the highway interrupted Mr. Treadwell. Hecla had arrived, drawn by horses and men. A citizen who wore a sugar-scoop hat and carried two leather buckets and a speaking trumpet, hurdled the fence and rushed to the porch. He saluted Hiram Look, the foreman of the Scotaze Ancient and Honorable Firemen's Association, and shouted at him through the speaking trumpet, though he was only a few feet from his blinking chief.

What he said in his stuttering breathlessness sounded like: "Wuff—uff—uff! Fuff, fuff! Snuff—uff! Ow wow-wow!"

"Take down that cussed spitball tube and talk human language," quoth the disgusted foreman. "What are you running up here for? There ain't no fire. Blast me, if I don't resign from an organization that doesn't know any better than to make itself the laughing-stock of this whole town."

"When citizens of this town holler 'Fiah!' and the union meetinghouse bell rings, it ain't for us to set down and pick whiteweed petals, saying: 'Tis a fire—'tain't a fire,'" remonstrated the loyal subaltern. "We just out and pelted it up here, chief, and now we report for duty. And it was a blasted hot run." He wiped his streaming face and licked his lips, craning his neck to inspect more closely what was in the tall glasses where the ice floated. "What if Cap'n Sproul's house *had* been on fire, and we hadn't come up? What if we had said to ourselves, 'Oh, let 'em holler. There probably ain't no fire.' No, sir, we ain't that sort. The minute we heard that there was trouble of some kind in Cap'n Sproul's, we left every-



The cap'n held it by the tapering end, and poised its heavy butt over Mr. Treadwell's head.

thing and run here. We come to show our respect and admiration for a prominent citizen—and now we hope that our efforts are going to be appreciated."

There was mild reproach in his tone, and his eyes thirstily regarded the amber fluid in the glasses.

Cap'n Sproul had been inarticulate for some moments. But this little speech, delivered in the hearing of a

crowd that packed the highway, stung him into speech and action. He had been foreman of the Scotaze Ancients, he knew their capacity for food and drink, and their dogged persistency in grafting for it. But Cap'n Sproul was not a man who would shirk his plain duty, when his townsmen were concerned and were present.

He stepped to the rail of his porch.

"I will state to one and all," he began, "that so fur's I'm concerned, this little party is entirely unexpected, but I—"

Mr. Treadwell waved his stick majestically, and broke in with loud voice:

"I maintain that I still have the floor, and before further speeches are made I will announce myself as the——".

Cap'n Sproul leaned over the rail, and, by a masterly swipe, grabbed the stick away from its owner. The cap'n held it by the tapering end, and poised its heavy butt over Mr. Treadwell's head.

"Close and batten your main hatch till I get done talking, you hot-air wallopers! Your case will be attended to in due time—you needn't worry none about that!"

The menaced champion of the world's teamsters seemed to understand the grate of authority in the human voice when he heard it, and he edged away.

"I'll say, feller citizens," proceeded Cap'n Sproul, "that though this party is unexpected, and I don't know yet what's the matter generally, I reckon that I personally know what is genteel and proper when gents have run uphill in the hot sun. I know what to do—and my wife and the hired girl will proceed to do it!"

The citizen with the speaking trumpet remarked through it, aiming it at his fellows: "Seef-eef, ow row-wow!"

They seemed to understand him, and gave three cheers for Cap'n Sproul. The cap'n spoke to his wife through the screen door, and there sounded immediately from the neighborhood of the kitchen a satisfying clinking of metal and glass.

There were other arrivals at this juncture. The village undertaker came up the hill in his black wagon, and the doctor's chaise followed close behind.

"I don't know as we're going to be able to use your fire department for anything sensible here to-day," the cap'n observed grimly to Hiram Look, "but if I don't get control of the feeling that's rising up in me, I'll be giving

that doctor and undertaker a job pretty quick."

"What's the trouble, cap'n?" inquired the doctor, bustling up to the porch.

"After you have examined that critter's head for hollows and have felt his pulse and looked at his tongue, and have got him disinfected, you may be able to tell what it is that ails him," stated Cap'n Sproul, with venom. "I haven't found out yet. He come into my yard a little while ago, and started a disturbance that would have constituted a breach of the peace at a Fiji Island war dance. I don't know who he is, nor where he come from, nor where he's going to—but I want to announce to all hearers that he agrees with a quiet afternoon about as well as rat poison agrees with the infant in his cradle."

"A man of my standing cannot listen to such remarks about himself without protest," declared Mr. Treadwell, bridling. "Here are my medals. I am professor of an art that will soon be reckoned among the lost arts. Read your Bibles and see how the ox and the ox teamster are held up as among the important things in the world. And yet how many men are there to-day who can team six oxen scientifically?"

"While you're on the question of what it ain't no use for a man to know," suggested the cap'n, "may I ask you how many men there are to-day who know how to whittle peaked ends onto sliced cobwebs, or who can fry fog cakes without having 'em scorch on? But I ain't in any mood to have a joint debate with you on what's the most useless thing in the world. I want to know what you mean by coming into my yard and setting everything by the ears in this style?"

The cap'n, with a flourish of his hand, indicated the goggling townspeople, the expectant Ancients—his invaded premises.

"Do you fail entirely to grasp the importance of preserving an art that is in danger of being lost to posterity?"

Cap'n Sproul still retained the goad stick. He held it in front of him, and surveyed it from end to end with frank disgust.

"I never teamed an ox, I don't want to team an ox, and I don't see how anybody else ever wants to. I'd rather race giraffes with a tandem team of mud turtles."

Mr. Treadwell turned from the cap'n with a sneer. He caught the eye of Hiram Look.

"I never try to convince an ignoramus against his will," he remarked. "I have heard about you, Mr. Look. I think I can do business better with you than with any one else."

"If you've got any business with me, or think you have, spit it out," advised the old showman.

"I'd rather talk it over in private."

"It has got to be rattled right out here in open meeting, mister. I don't propose to have anybody think in this town that I'm buttoned up with a crank in any secrets."

Mr. Treadwell was plainly sullen and resentful, and he scowled at the crowd and hesitated.

"You can't go into a corner and hatch up any plots with *me*," insisted Hiram.

"I don't want to hatch any plots. I have come here with a business proposition, sir. You have owned a circus, and you ought to know a good show when you see one. You have just seen my show. If it is handled right and advertised in good shape, people will pack into theaters to see it. No oxen will be used. People are flattered when their imagination is appealed to. I say, you have seen my show—the ox as a beast of burden has gone—the horse is going—gasoline is doing it all. I am preserving a lost art, and the show will grow more interesting as the years go on. I ask you without any fear as to your answer—how do you like my show?"

"Well," drawled Hiram, fiddling his finger under his nose, "considering the fact that you've got out the fire department, the doctor and undertaker, and about half the people in this village by just plain yawp, it might be said that from one point of view the show is a success. So is a riot in an insane horse-pit from that point of view. If you propose to preserve that art, I'd advise

you to can it with a lot of pickle on it. And never open the can."

"I was intending to give you a chance to back me in the thing—to manage me, and make a lot of money, but I find I should not care to be associated with so vulgar a nature," declared Professor Treadwell. "But there may be other men in this crowd who will appreciate a good thing when they see it. I'll thank you for my property!" He walked up to the porch and snapped his fingers at the cap'n. "I propose to show this assemblage how six oxen can be teamed."

"Not by a tin damsite—not here in my yard!" roared the cap'n, putting the stick behind him. "There don't no second alarm go in from my premises today, you horn-faced howlaferinus! You'll have the Odd Fellers, Sons of Temperance, both Sunday schools, and the Scotaze Custard Pie Association rushing up here next. This picnic is now limited to those present."

"And he was the means of getting 'em here," suggested Hiram. "If he's a sport, he'll divide the expense of the treat with you, Aaron. Better keep his gad for security until he comes across."

"I will not consider any such proposition," announced Mr. Treadwell stiffly. "I came here on a matter of business—strict business. If prominent men see fit to turn serious business into monkeyshines and call a fire department up here when there's no earthly need of doing such a thing, they may go ahead and make fools of themselves. I refuse to be dragged in. And I demand my ten-thousand-dollar, gold-trimmed, champion-of-the-world goad stick. If I don't get it at once I shall proceed to make trouble for somebody."

"If you can make any more for me than you already have, go ahead and try it," advised the cap'n. "I'm always interested in seeing a feller try hard. But you don't get this stick yet a while. We want to let this riot settle down nicely before you start another one. Gents, kindly form in line and pass around past the kitchen door, and something will be handed out in the way of refreshments."



"Gents, kindly form in line and pass around past the kitchen door, and something will be handed out in the way of refreshments."

Mr. Treadwell was crowded to one side and stood glowering on the procession as it filed gustfully past him.

"There's nothing mean about me, professor," said the cap'n, moderating his acerbity somewhat. "I don't like either your looks or your actions—and I ain't at all bashful about saying so. But if you're hankering for a little something cool with a stick in it, pass along to the back door and soak your tongue for a few moments. If I'm any judge of a tongue, yours must need treatment."

8

"I don't care to accept any favors from the kind of a man you are," stated Mr. Treadwell with a provoking sneer.

Cap'n Sproul came down off his porch, and Hiram accompanied him, displaying the interest of a friend. There was a gleam in the cap'n's eyes that should have suggested something even to the bemaled champion.

"Being always on the lookout for opinions, criticisms, and footnotes to my character as offered to me by strangers passing along this way, I'd like to get

your general notion as to just the kind of a man I am."

"You're an obstinate and cantankerous old dub, puffed up with a sense of your own importance because you have sloshed around the world as a sea captain, bossing men who didn't know anything at all."

Mr. Treadwell's horns of whiskers bristled angrily, and he was evidently willing to express himself without fear or favor.

The cap'n bestowed an amazed glance on Hiram, and resumed his inspection of Mr. Treadwell.

"I come here with a straight business proposition, give you a free exhibition of a wonderful art, and all you do is to slur me before the face and eyes of the public. Because you don't know anything about a subject is no reason why you should throw down somebody who does know."

The stranger beat the flat of his hand upon his medals.

"In your general ignorance you don't realize who I am. Compared with you, and all this rabble you have collected here to sneer at me, I am a coconut among peanuts."

"You're a nut, all right," muttered Hiram, "but I wasn't sure of the variety till now. We'll take your word for it."

"Perhaps you'll take my word for something else, then," shouted Mr. Treadwell. "I'll show you whether I'm a professor or not. I'll show you whether my intellect towers over the combined intellect of the two of you, as the giant oak towers over the toadstool at its roots. Do you know what the matter is with you? Both of you have got nihil fits in your planetary systems—you've got aggravated vox populi of your ad valorem, and cutaneous cutacarpal pluribus of your solar ribs, and your brains are being eaten up with lunar blastitis. Have you got anything definite to say to that?"

"Nothing just at this present writing," said the cap'n. "But I may drop you a postal card after I think the thing over." He exchanged another look with Hiram. Then he edged over and whispered in the old showman's ear:

"A dim notion of something to do to this critter is taking shape in my mind. It doesn't show up just now much clearer than a goose egg rubbed over with phosphorus and sailing in a fog-bank. But there's a nub!"

"You sneer, and you think there isn't any art in driving oxen."

"There isn't," declared the cap'n.

The professor grabbed the whiskers on his cheeks, twisted them into tighter horns, and sputtered incoherently.

"You're just like a lot of other chaps in this world, Treadwell. They put a lot of hoorah and hoot, fush and frills, and extray trimmings onto a simple thing, and call it 'art.' And when a plain man steps up and says he doesn't understand it, they say his imagination isn't working right. You howled around my yard and made a riot over imaginary oxen—but there's no telling whether real oxen would have moved out of their tracks for all of your swishing and yelling. I can drive oxen better than you can—and I never had a gad in my hand before."

"Nonsense," raved the champion. "You couldn't drive a cat up to a cream pitcher."

Cap'n Sproul noted with satisfaction that the populace was returning from the back door to the front yard. The participants in the treat were scruffing their lips with their hands, and appeared to have enjoyed their refreshments.

The cap'n pinched the goad stick between his knees and pulled out his wallet. He selected bills and handed them to the doctor.

"There's one hundred dollars, Treadwell, that I'm posting up against this dollar gad of yours."

He promptly checked the furious ex-postulations of the professor regarding its true value.

"It ain't what a man says a thing is worth in this world—it's what it *is* worth. This is nothing but a shilling's worth of brass and an ash stick—and it's worth a dollar. The money I have put up talks for itself, and if I don't show to the satisfaction of this crowd that I can drive oxen, all you've got to

do is to take that money and pass on your way rejoicing."

"Where's your oxen?" asked Mr. Treadwell.

"I'll take eight imaginary ones and drive 'em in a figger eight around two trees," stated the cap'n calmly. "That will be doubling your ante."

"No, sir! I won't agree to imaginary oxen," protested the professor. "You have shown that you haven't any imagination. I don't believe there's a man in this crowd of ordinary muckers that has a bit of imagination."

"We'll show you almighty quick that we've got something else if you call us any more names," declared one of the crowd, the citizen with the scoop fireman's hat. "We've got Heely, and we'll put the hose onto you."

"Let's not have any hard feelings," pleaded Cap'n Sprout. "I'm an easy man to please myself. I ain't even going to insist on the imaginary-oxen part of this thing. But I don't know of an ox that's left in this town—and I've been assessor of taxes, at that."

"There are not any oxen trained to the yoke in these days," stated the champion. "I told you so a little while ago. I am preserving a lost art, and I—"

"Yes, you told us all that, too," broke in the cap'n. "This ain't going to be a joint debate—it's to settle a bet. Look at that money in the doc's fist, Treadwell."

The professor looked at the bills that the doctor waved, and his eyes glistened.

"I am positive that you can't drive oxen, and I'll make the bet that you can't," he said. "Now I'll listen to suggestions as to how you can go to work to show me."

The tone of Cap'n Sprout became mild, and his demeanor bland and innocent.

"Judging from your medals and what you say, I don't suppose there's a man in the whole world who knows better how to drive oxen than you do," he suggested.

Mr. Treadwell set his shoulders back and agreed most heartily.

"And if you know how to drive oxen, you must be mighty familiar with the way the ox would feel about it. That is to say, if you was an ox, and knew as much about driving as you say you know, then you'd be able to tell in a jiffy whether I was giving off right orders to make the ox do so and so, hey?"

"Of course," declared Mr. Treadwell.

"It's nice for two men to get together and agree as well on all points as we're agreeing," purred the cap'n. "I'm sorry you and me had any disagreement at the start. Now we're getting along all right. Kindly state, Treadwell, seeing that I don't know as much about the thing as you do, whether or not the main object in driving oxen is to get the oxen to where you want 'em to go."

"Certainly it is, sir. And that is what makes driving oxen an art, for the driving must be done without reins. A driver can use only a goad stick and his voice."

"And if he uses his voice and his gad, and gets the oxen to where he wants 'em to go, then he can drive oxen, hey?"

"That's right."

"Now let's get to a perfect understanding. It ain't just the voice alone—the orders, hey? Motions with the stick has to go along with the orders, as I understand it."

"You understand right. Takes orders and stick at the same time, as my recent exhibition should have shown you."

"I hate to ask so many questions, but I'm somewhat of a greenhorn on the ox question, and I'm taking you for authority. The general idea is, if you can make an ox understand what you want him to do, and then make him do it, you can be said to be teaming the ox, eh?"

"That's the main essence of driving," admitted the champion.

"As an expert, you'd know in a jiffy whether or not I was making an ox understand, wouldn't you?"

"Of course I would."

"Then what's the matter with this plan?—you make believe you're an ox.



Without further preface, he jabbed the inch of brad into Mr. Treadwell's person—and Mr. Treadwell moved!

If I can't make you understand what I want you to do, then you take the hundred dollars."

Mr. Treadwell blinked and twisted his whiskers, and stared at the cap'n. But Cap'n Sproul stared back with the innocent demeanor of a country schoolma'am. Then the doctor flipped the ten-dollar bills invitingly.

"You see," put in the cap'n suavely, "my idea is that it is not necessary to rant, and holler, and swish so much. I believe this thing can be done more politely. An ox may not be a combination of Dan'l Webster and Lord Chesterfield, but I believe in using him with a fair amount of decency so long as he does his own part according to Hoyle."

This mild statement seemed to have a quieting effect on Mr. Treadwell's suspicions.

"I say again, I should certainly know whether you were making the ox understand," he admitted.

"In an important matter like this

there's nothing like having the leading expert in the world to decide the thing," said Cap'n Sproul, appeal in his tones.

"It will be very easy for me to show this crowd that you don't know the least elements of ox driving," promised the champion, after a pause. "For the purposes of the experiment, I'll pretend to be an ox."

"Seeing that you object to two imaginary oxen, I'm splitting the difference with you, so to speak," explained Cap'n Sproul. "By this arrangement of ours, I have one real ox and one imaginary one—calling you the real ox. Your point about the imaginary oxen was well taken. If you can't see an ox move, you can't tell that he is moving. Now you just get right down on your hands and knees, and we'll start in."

"I think we can experiment just as well if I stand up."

"I ain't contracting to drive no two-legged oxen, Treadwell. You, yourself, wouldn't undertake to team an ox

that was standing up on its hind legs. Get down!"

Mr. Treadwell gave a side glance at the money, and got down upon his hands and knees.

Cap'n Sproul spit into his fist, grabbed the goad stick, and ordered the bystanders to crowd back and give him plenty of room.

"Wheel hard over—hard-a-port!" he commanded. "Now off on the starboard tack!"

He wagged the goad stick under Mr. Treadwell's nose and pointed off to the right.

The professor glanced up at the driver with resentful glint in his eyes.

"That isn't ox language," he protested.

"But when I use my voice and the gad at the same time, and point off to the right, there ain't any doubt in your mind as to what's wanted, is there?"

"I don't say but what I understand, but an ox——"

"The other ox—the imaginary one—understands all right, and is pulling the yoke," insisted the cap'n. "Come, move!"

He tapped the gad against the professor's cheek in gentle monition.

"But no teamster would ever say anything but 'Wo haw!' It isn't regular—that language of yours."

"Your own statement was that the main point in driving was to make your oxen understand which way to go. You understand! Up killick!"

"There's another word that no teamster ever heard of. It——"

"Say, you huffel-headed swale pirate, I ain't here to discuss the dictionary with you. Next thing I know you'll be asking me to parse sentences and spell words. I've given you bearings and compass course. Haul your mainsheet and come onto your tack!"

Mr. Treadwell came up on his knees in order to protest more effectually, but the cap'n set heavy hand on his shoulders, and rammed him back into his original posture.

"This is one mark against me," admitted the cap'n. "A driver ain't supposed to take an ox by the collar and

snatch him around. There's a strictly right way of handling a balky ox, and I know what it is, and shall use it. Treadwell, after this warning. Confound your ha'slet, mush daw! That's French for hump yourself."

He took the goad stick in both hands and menaced the champion.

"Don't you dare to hit me with that!" yelped the volunteer ox.

"What in blazes is a gad for when an ox knows what you want of him and sags back and won't do it?" demanded Cap'n Sproul. "That other ox is sagging hard and trying to start. You're going to help him with this load, or I'll know the reason why."

He banged Mr. Treadwell across the coat tails.

Mr. Treadwell came to his feet and started for the cap'n with clenched fists. The cap'n gave him a tap on the cranium that sent him down upon his hands and knees again.

"It's this way," explained Cap'n Sproul. "I don't mean to hurt you. I mean to be quiet and polite. I haven't lifted my voice yet. But you're an ox, Treadwell. Just now you reared up and tried to hook me. And there's no ox hooks me so long's I've got a gad in good working order."

"I won't move," squealed the professor. "There's nothing regular about it. I emphatically refuse to move."

"You know the way I want you to go—and still you refuse to obey orders given out in gentlemanly style?"

"I do."

"Rule eleven in my copy of 'The Ox Teamsters' Chart, Guide, and Ready Reckoner,'" stated the cap'n coldly, "says that when an ox distinctly says that he will not move—course and bearings having been given—he shall be made to move in A-one, shipshape, and seamanly fashion."

Without further preface, he jabbed the inch of brad into Mr. Treadwell's person—and Mr. Treadwell moved! He shot ahead and tumbled onto his nose. As he came upon his hands and knees again, the cap'n was over him.

"If you try to stand up and hook me, I'll bat that head off'm your shoulders,"

the driver rasped. "Now starboard your helm and come around this way—and come lively!"

A milder prick with the brad emphasized the command. Mr. Treadwell gasped furious oaths, but the menace of the heavy butt and the hint of the sharp brad, and the cap'n's alacrity in employing both, kept him on his hands and knees. He circled two trees in docile fashion, his nose following the waving goad stick.

Cap'n Sproul finished the performance by backing Mr. Treadwell up against one of the trees in fine style.

"Is there any gent in this crowd," inquired the cap'n, "who will presume to say that I haven't teamed this yoke of oxen—including the imaginary one, of course—according to the rules made and provided for teaming? That is to say, they understood which way I wanted them to go, and went where I said."

By enthusiastic viva-voce vote his methods were indorsed.

"But I say you didn't," roared Mr. Treadwell, posting himself against the tree and guarding his person from further attack.

"Do you propose to claim that you didn't go where I told you to go?" demanded Cap'n Sproul. "If there is going to be any dispute or doubt about it, we'll do the thing over again."

Mr. Treadwell hooked his arms around the tree and violently protested.

"I don't like to hear the ox criticizing the driver," volunteered Hiram Look. "I speak the sentiments of the crowd when I say that Cap'n Sproul wins. A few 'Gee haws' more or less don't count in teaming oxen. It's producing results and getting to where you want to get that makes a teamster worth

while. Treadwell, I want to say to you that you showed a mighty mean disposition for an ox. Usually they don't balk, rear, or try to hook. You did all three, and the way my friend, Cap'n Aaron Sproul, handled you shows that he's an expert. Doc, hand the money back to the cap'n."

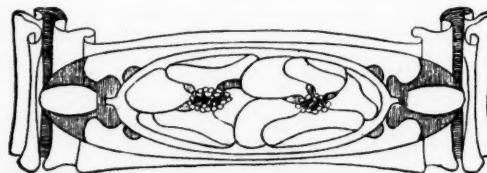
"I hold no grudges against you for any unfair tricks such as my friend, Look, refers to, Treadwell," said the cap'n, with patronizing air. "I understood how to manage your tantrums, and so it's all right. Step around and refresh yourself. You must be thirsty."

"I'll have nothing more to do with you or anything that belongs to you," clamored the maddened champion. "I have been abused and insulted. You hand over that goad stick that you have polluted."

"I have won this gad on a fair bet," returned the cap'n serenely. "Vote of assembled citizens says so." He called to his wife, and she came out on the porch. "Louada Murilla, take this gad and tie ribbons onto it, and hang it up 'side of them Fiji bows and arrers. There's nothing like having trophies to look at in your old age. And mix up another round for the boys. There's nothing like being pleasant and sociable when you have your friends around you."

Mr. Treadwell took no chances when he departed. He backed out of the yard, his malevolent gaze never leaving the cap'n's face. He went on, and Scotaze never heard of him again.

"There's one thing I forgot to ask him, and I'm sorry for it," said the cap'n, touching his glass to Hiram's a few minutes later. "I wanted to know if any of them diseases he said we had are ketching."





HEART'S DESIRE

By
Helen Baker Parker



Author of "The Willow Plume," "His Masterpiece," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

SU'CIDE, Nikolene?"
Zofia spoke the fateful word in her native tongue, and clutched the newspaper in a firmer grasp. The paper was neither hers nor Nikolene's. It was, moreover, two days old—but the front-page story had lost none of its fascination.

Zofia studied the face of the newspaper photograph, and gazed intently at black headlines that she could not read.

"A woman, too!" she breathed in awe. "Why did she do it?"

"A man, of course, you little fool!" scorned Nikolene, the wise one.

"You see——"

She had told it already to several neighbors who had been over but a little while, or who, for some other reason, were yet unable to profit by the "world's greatest newspaper," and she yearned to tell it again. But Zofia thrust the paper away in a passion of anger.

"A man!" she growled. "A man!"

Leaving Nikolene to hunt another audience, Zofia climbed wearily the three flights of stairs that led to the place the man with brass buttons called an "apartment," the four reeking walls within which were all her earthly possessions: a few shabby clothes hanging on a rusty nail, a creaking wire cot, a warped kitchen table, nondescript articles that passed for chair and cupboard, a green box bearing a foreign stamp—and *Felix*. Felix was playing

now with a tomato can and a piece of unusually lovely red twine that had drifted down from Mrs. Muldaney's groceries on the floor above, her daughter having a grand wedding the night.

With a hoarse, guttural cry that meant, in English, "heart's desire," with rough, half-articulate sounds signifying "jewel," and "dearest one," Zofia leaned over him, held him fiercely in her thin arms until he struggled from her, whimpering. Sinking on the creaking cot, she looked at him, but it was not his red curls she saw, or his eyes, out of whose brown depths looked a great wonder at the mystery of life; not his beautiful body—which, in spite of bad milk and pushcart fruit, still kept its baby dimples—or the perfect oval of his face. She saw his future. Zofia's imagination was not a commercial asset—but it kept her awake at night.

Until yesterday Zofia had worked in a factory; but now she was done. She could work no more. Indeed, they would not have her. The boss had taken her roughly by the arm when she had coughed yesterday. She was sorry to be a disturbance, and had been able to keep back the cough until noon, and had hidden her reddened handkerchief in her waist. Now she was through, all through. And she did not care, for herself—she was so tired. The interne at the free dispensary had said that she might, perhaps, have yet a month. All she wanted, for herself, was one day in



Sinking on the creaking cot, she looked at him, but it was not his red curls she saw, or his eyes, or his beautiful body, or the perfect oval of his face. She saw his future.

the country. She yearned unspeakably for a sight of the sky—not the brazen line of it that mocked her, close over the cañon of the city street, but the blue, far-stretching arch that she knew must be there, somewhere far off beyond the belching factory chimneys; for some peaceful, rippling, pebbly stream. One day in the country, and then—oh, what a dream was that!—to lie down somewhere out there under the quiet trees and go to sleep—and sleep—and sleep for—

But Felix! At thought of him now, her weak, bloodless hands were

clenched. It was thought of him that woke her from her sweating at night with icy terror freezing her heart. There was something to worry one, a little boy like Felix the beautiful! This fine lady that had got her picture in the paper, she had killed herself for the sake of a man.

Well, Zofia had had a man, too, once. He had come a year before her and her child to get some of the gold in this rich, lucky America. Alone in the steerage, with their baby whom he had never seen, Zofia had followed—but Ignace was not there at Ellis Island.

All day she had waited, big-eyed with wonder, hope, and fear; but he had not come.

Zofia had been well in those days, a radiantly beautiful creature, with cheeks like wild roses and stars in her eyes; and she had, moreover, money in a little purple bag. So they had let her stay. Often now she wondered if she might not have feigned some soreness of the eyes, a crooked hip—some defect that would have sent her back into the sunlight.

She had gone to work in a factory, leaving the baby with old Selma, who had three sharp, yellow teeth and the face of a witch. Selma told her that husbands who came ahead of their wives found American sweethearts with little waists and white faces; that it always happened so; that half a dozen pretty girls had been crazy over that Ignace. Did not she know? Had not her old eyes seen?

At the end of a year Zofia had found that her Ignace had died of a fever; that his last vision had been that of the ship that bore her to harbor; that he had longed for her coming, and boasted to every one of his "so lovely Zofia, flower of the world," and that fat Felix, whom he had never seen. Then, although Zofia had lost her red cheeks, her bright eyes, and her money in the purple bag, she held her head high and nourished her heart on memories. There were even hours when life held a certain rapture when she told that Nikolene, straight to her painted face, that not all men were like those whose gold chains she wore.

But little Felix! Zofia's fever was rising now, and her brain was hotter than the air that smelled of dead things. Who would take care of Felix, the beautiful one, when the month the interne told her of was gone? Heaven, that had been two weeks ago! Old Selma, who knew so much, had told her that in those orphan homes terrible, unnamable things happened. And Nikolene had read out of the wonderful newspapers about those kidnapings. *Who would take care of Felix?* Would Nikolene, who had many lovers and no

husband? Would Mrs. Maloney, whose drunken husband beat her and her children? Would Mrs. Holberg, who had nine already, and cursed at the wash-tub the coming tenth?

These and their doings constituted Zofia's world. To be sure through this inclosing circumference, she darted night and morning into outer darkness, where were many flights of drunken stairs, all alike; evil-smelling streets full of evil eyes; the great factory within which one could scarcely hear the shrieking of the floor men for the deafening whir of the great wheels and the enormous, swirling belts—little Angela had caught her long black hair in a belt; and the boss. A long time ago, when she was pretty, he had put his arm about her round waist and looked into her eyes. She had struck him on his thick, red lips; but Fear had never ceased to crouch just outside her door.

She thought about the future of Felix a long time, while he played with the tin can and the string. After a while she got up, her hand at her burning head, gave him a cracker and the empty box, staggered out, and locked the door on him and his play, and went stealthily down the stairs. She passed Nikolene, gossiping with a wonderful young man with a pink tie and high-heeled yellow shoes, and rested on the bottom step until the conversation was finished; then, with a cunning show of indifference, she asked Nikolene how the woman with her picture in the paper had managed it—that "suicide." With true histrionic ability, Nikolene plunged joyously into details.

"At a drug store it was, the place with the red globe in the window and the shaving mug out over the corner—no, not a saloon! What a little fool you are, Zofia! And she got it for a cat!"

Nikolene laughed at the very good joke.

An hour later Zofia leaned at her rickety table and looked through a smooth, shiny bottle in her hands. Felix was tired of the tin can and string, and he wanted the pretty bottle. With a fierce caress, Zofia pushed him away



Zofia had worked in a factory; but now she was done. She could work no more.

and put the bottle on top of the grocery box that was a cupboard. Once more would they eat—nice mealy potatoes and raisin buns that Felix loved.

It was just then that the little wife of the mission preacher chose Felix out of all the noisy tenement to go with her to the mission.

"He ain't fix," complained Zofia. "I don't like he should go places not dressed up."

But the little visitor would have him whether or no, and, behold! she had beneath her arm a Pandora box out of which came a clean suit just the size of the beautiful one! And there was food in that box, too, for Zofia to eat while he was gone, and bottles of cool grape juice, and a cool, white nightgown with lace and ribbon run through.

At the little mission over S. Cohen's store, the children saw lovely pictures

of country, with blue sky and winding river—pictures of One with queer, long, white clothes holding little children in His arms—and listened to the pretty lady talk. They could understand but few of her words, but they were able to translate exactly into their own mother tongue the eloquence of her smiles and the tender light in her eyes.

When the last song had been sung and the little "Christian soldiers" were marching onward into the furnace-heated street, the wife of the mission preacher drew Felix out of the line and held him in her arms until the sound of tramping feet died away, and there was no sound at all in the room.

"See!" she said to the mission preacher, who had deep-blue eyes above a silky brown beard that went down in a point. "See now, Harold! This is the one! I want him! Oh, Harold, I

want him! I've known about him for a month—but I didn't tell you."

"Why, Emma! You little mother of mercy, you've got a hundred already!"

"I don't want him—that way, Harold! I want him—oh, don't you know—for my own! To keep! I've always wanted one—you know that. A hundred don't—fill the place—that was meant for one." She held the child closer. "I think, dear, he's going to be alone in the world, soon." Her eyes challenged the eyes of the preacher. "You hold him, Harold. Lift him up. See—see how heavy he is! Feel of his hair, dear—feel of his soft cheeks—see the little dimple that comes when he laughs. Smile, Felix, dear, for the nice man!"

The mission preacher stooped and took the child in his arms, held him so a long moment closely, looking at the childless woman at his side. And then he smiled and kissed Felix on his sunny curls.

"What did you do, my heart's desire?" questioned Zofia, her eyes burning with the fever in her wild brain.

"Oh, my mother!" Felix was full of the great adventure. Words tumbled out of his mouth, eager words borrowed now and again from the language of his adoption. "I saw pictures of big sky! And water! And green grass everywhere! And that Jesu you once did tell me of a long time ago—holding little kids like me by His knee and lifting them high by His shoulder. And Jesu was there Himself with His 'Merican clothes on, and He held me, too! He

lifted me up, and said: 'Well, sir, how would you like to be my little boy?'"

To the fevered vision of Zofia, there seemed a light about his head.

"Jesu!" she murmured. "Jesu!"

"And you're going to the country on the morrow," he went on. "Mothers are to go, and children, and it costs nothing! Lots to eat, and green grass, and flowers! And the pretty lady comes by the morning early so we should not be lost."

Felix could see nothing at all to make his mother lean with sudden heaviness on the table, and sob wildly, clutching him in her arms; nothing to make her



"I don't want him—that way, Harold! I want him—oh, don't you know—for my own! To keep!"

laugh until he grew more frightened of the laughter than of the weeping.

"Come, my jewel," said she at last. "We have much to do before the morrow. Clothes must be clean for thee and me. And me—I shall wear the white dress thy father did love long ago—the white one with the lace in the neck and the sleeves small like now again. Oh, this *stylishness!*"

That night Felix slept well, in spite of an ill-chosen banana from a pushcart—so he did not hear the crashing of a little bottle far down on the slimy bottom of the court. He did not smell the penetrating, sweet odor that drifted up, up, into the heavy alley air. He knew nothing at all until he heard the fiercely

tender name his mother loved to call him. He opened his eyes. She was leaning over him in the early-morning light—dressed as he had never seen her, in lovely soft white; and she was looking at him just as she had looked at his father the day he sailed away to America—but Felix did not know that—and she was able to smile now, as she had been able to smile then.

"Wake up, my jewel! Wake up, my beautiful one! The lady will be here. We will go away, far off till we find the sunshine and the blue, blue sky, and maybe a little river flowing. Wake up! It is morning! We will laugh and be glad together, thou and I, this one more day!"



German Science to the Rescue

SOMETIMES your pet humorous story falls flat in a way that is really much funnier than the story itself. One day, for instance, I tried to enliven a dinner party by repeating that well-worn tale that they used to tell "on" Richard Harding Davis. You remember it, don't you? About how he and Charles Dana Gibson went into Delmonico's one day and found that their favorite table was already occupied by a man and a woman.

"The admirable Dickie," feeling that he couldn't "relish his vittles" so well in any other spot, sent a waiter over to request the man and woman to be so good as to choose another table. The man, evidently an independent citizen, sent back word that he and the lady had already ordered, and preferred to stay where they were, thank you.

"Oh," said Mr. Davis, nonplussed by the refusal. "Why, they can't understand who we are, can they?" And he advanced upon the surprising pair.

"Probably," he said urbanely, "you didn't quite understand whose request you were refusing. This, my friend here, is Mr. Charles Dana Gibson, and I myself am Richard Harding Davis!"

The man at the table rose politely.

"Delighted," said he, with equal urbanity, "to meet you, Mr. Gibson—Mr. Davis. But possibly, Mr. Davis, you did not quite understand from whom you were making your request. This, my companion here, is Queen Victoria, and I myself am the Czar of all the Russias!"

Well, most of the dinner party laughed politely, and appeared to be quite appreciably enlivened. Only the German gentleman at the other end of the table regarded me, without even a momentary lighting of his scientific countenance.

About ten minutes later his voice boomed ponderously down to me.

"Fräulein," he announced sternly, "pardon me, but I do not think that that story you told is quite true."

"Don't you, herr professor?" I stammered. "Why not?"

"No, no," he said, shaking his head more benignly. "I am sure it is not. I have been thinking the matter over carefully, very carefully, and I cannot recall that Queen Victoria and the czar ever have visited here in America, to say nothing of visiting here at the same time, and dining like that in a public restaurant."



Accentuated

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY HY. MAYER

AS bib-u-lous-ness is me curse
I loafed at Anchor Inn,
With twenty dollars in me purse
An' me person full o' gin.
The language that I talked with Hal,
As I held his manly wrist,
Was very deep and myst-i-cal—
With an accent on the mist.

We talked about the human race
Beneath the lamplight's gloam,
Till Pete, the barkeep, closed the place
An' sent us reelin' home.
We touched upon astrology
What time our spirits riz,
Then we took up phys-i-o-log-y—
With an accent on the fizz.

At last he got me to me door
An' laid me in me bunk.
Already I began to snore
As into dreams I sunk.
In slumber still I talked with Hal
On subjects deep an' high
In language py-ro-tech-ni-cal—
With an accent on the pie.

At dawn I woke a-feelin' skeered,
For all at once, plumb chill,
I knowed that Hal had disappeared
With me twenty-dollar bill.
For it seemed that Hal, to my distress,
Had came an' helped me on
Through Christian con-sci-en-tious-ness—
With an accent on the con.



The Awakening of Romola

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "Marcia," "Marianna Returns," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

CHAPTER XI.

IS there any particular reason why you don't hear what I am saying to you, Bert?"

Deborah Keith's words were more politely measured than usual, and her tones were silken. But there was a stormy glitter in her eyes.

Her husband turned abruptly from the view that he was seeming to contemplate, a view of November shrubbery at the end of the lawn, and of bare trees beyond. The Sunday newspaper, which he had been pretending to read, had slipped to the floor, the cigar that he was pretending to smoke was dead in 'is fingers.

"I beg your pardon!" he cried. "I must have been half asleep. Getting too old, Debbie, for these late parties. That one of Mayhew's last night was too much for an old man."

"Fiddle!" answered Deborah, scanning him intently and suspiciously. "We were at home by two o'clock—I don't call that late! And it is twelve now—you've had ten hours to catch up with slumber! Have you the least idea what I was saying?"

Bertram smiled upon her. It was a lazy, winning smile, and it lighted up his drab face.

"Not the very least in the world," he answered. "I hope it was something pleasant?"

"I was telling you that your distract airs last night *had* made people talk. You were about as merry as a death's-head, and the whole party was agog about it. Of course, I don't know the

cause of your preoccupations, but I want to tell you that all the world believes you are worried to death about business. Every one is reading those attacks in the *Sun*. Can't you sue them for libel?"

"There's a wise saw about the plaintiff's coming into court with clean hands, my dear, which is very likely to keep me from beginning any actions. Not," he added quickly, "that there is any ground for apprehension. The Open Sesame Mine is as good as most—once we collect the money to work it properly."

"We?" she echoed. "Why, are you interested in the working of the mine? I thought you were interested only in the sale of the stock?"

"You're quite right—we're a promoting concern, not a working one. However, I'm rather in the habit of saying 'we' about the Open Sesame business."

"And the thing isn't on the level, then?"

"My dear girl," replied Keith, lighting another cigar and looking bored, "the beginning of every great enterprise is a gamble. The only thing that is on the level, as you phrase it, is proved success. If we gather in enough money to work the mine, and if it proves as profitable as—er—there is every reason to hope; as—er—the other mines in the vicinity have proved, why, we shall have been on the level throughout. If, on the other hand, we fail, either through the timidity of investors, or the inscrutable ways of Providence in veining the earth with copper, I dare say

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the verdict will be that we haven't been on the level."

"Are you really putting any of the money from the sale of stock into working the hole in the ground?" she demanded.

"When we have enough to make it worth while, we shall undoubtedly do so," he answered, with a flickering look of amusement on his face.

He watched her with an air of curiosity, as if to mark the effect of his half confession upon her. She crossed the room to where he sat and flung herself on her knees beside him. Her face was aglow with feeling—with a new admiration, he felt.

"How I love you when you are like that, Bert!" she cried. "Oh, if we had only lived two or three centuries ago, what a beautiful Dick Turpin you would have made, and how I should have adored you and followed you—"

"I forgot," said Keith, with melancholy humor, "whether your following would have led you to the gallows."

"It doesn't matter! I should have followed you anywhere! Of course," she added meditatively, "I like money; I can't seem to get on without it—lots of money! But it isn't just money that I love. If you made it in some dull, respectable fashion—wool, or wholesale groceries, or beer—did you know that I had a brewer suitor once?—I shouldn't care about you. But gambler's money—that's more than money; that is a game, isn't it? It's fun to think of your winning gems, and wines, and gorgeous palaces for Deborah, from dull, respectable, unimaginative, greedy people who haven't any daring of their own. And you do care something for me, don't you? Even when you go glooming about at parties and staring out of windows, without ever looking at me."

He passed his hand wearily over her dark hair.

"This is a new Deborah," he said. "I don't think I have met her before, with her doubts and misgivings."

He stooped and kissed her. But she twisted out of his arms, and swayed backward on her knees until her burn-

ing, suspicious, dark eyes could gaze directly, challengingly, into his blue ones.

"You don't answer me!" she cried. "You don't answer me! Tell me the truth! Are you tiring of me? Are you through with it—that great passion that swept away everything? Oh, I was a fool! I knew—every woman knows—that a man who is faithless to one love will be faithless to another! But tell me—tell me! I demand to know!"

"For Heaven's sake, Deborah," said Keith, with tired, cutting chilliness, "don't be hysterical and make a scene in hearing of the servants! You know perfectly well—"

"The servants!" She sprang to her feet, and laughed shortly, contemptuously. "You are a middle-class Englishman, after all—you poor, make-believe highwayman! The criticism of your neighbors, the ears of your hirings—those are your conscience. It's a pity you didn't stay at home with the women of your own tame kind."

There was a cruel frigidity in his blue glance.

"I entirely agree with you," he answered.

At the unexpected retort, such as her jealous outbursts had never before provoked, she seemed to struggle for speech, her face transfigured with rage, her throat, visible above the low-necked negligee that she wore, working painfully. The anger faded from his face as he watched her; a sort of pity, half fond, half despising, and in some way self-inclusive, took its place. He spoke to her:

"There, Deborah, you drove me into that ugly speech. We say terrible things to each other. It is not our minds—not our hearts—that speak; it is our harassed nerves, our frazzled emotions. We live too hard; we—forgive me!—drink too much. It's not merely temperamental passion and tempestuousness that make you talk to me as you have been talking; it's last night's party—many a last night's party. If you—care for me—as you say, as I believe, you must let me have peace at home. I have affairs that rack me in the city. I can't be racked here, too.

You only drive me into brutality and caddishness when you make these scenes. I— Oh, don't you see that we must hang together better than this?"

"You mean," she answered slowly, "that we're chained to each other for life; and that we must make the best of it! I won't endure such an existence. If you don't love me, if you don't desire me, and my presence, and my love as you did the very first day you thought you wanted them, you shan't have to endure me another moment." She paused and then said: "Do you remember that day, Bert?"

Her voice had changed seductively. Her dark eyes glowed with tenderness, with gayety, with amorous recollection. She came nearer to him; the floating silk of her draperies touched him, the perfume from her hair, from her warm, glowing skin, was on the air. He looked up at her. He recognized the invitation that she was making to him to forget, to forgive, to ignore, the ugly moment just past. For a second there passed another vision before his eyes—a slim, pale, tired-looking, golden-haired woman, bending over a frail little boy. He clenched his teeth together in the sharp determination to shut out the picture. He opened his arms to Deborah, and took her to his heart. And as he smoothed her hair, and held her face against his shoulder, he looked out across her with eyes that saw the fate he had achieved for himself, and accepted it, dully, bitterly.

"That's better, isn't it?" he whispered to her, kissing her at last.

Harry Graham, not being given to the analysis of his own emotions, or those of the rest of the world, never could have guessed just how the quarrel and the reconciliation of the Keiths on that Sunday morning influenced his entire existence. He was much infatuated with Deborah. Her wit was of a quality that he could appreciate; her abounding life and vigor appealed to him as strong sauces appeal to dull palates. She stimulated faculties grown somewhat lethargic from a long course of too much eating, drinking, card play-

ing—from too much material living, in short, with no intellectual or spiritual interest to balance it. And on Sundays this fall he was always restless until he could decently—as he defined decency—abandon the society in his own home and go to the Keiths'.

He fatuously complimented himself upon the kindly skill with which he concealed his real state of mind from Florence. She had never guessed—of that he was quite sure, reasoning with much simplicity from the fact that she had never reproached him, never questioned him. She had seemed to suffer more than usual from her bad headaches, of late; he was deucedly sorry for her; it must be an abominable thing to be a woman, liable to wretched headaches, and to weariness, and to weakness. Of course, he was awfully sorry for Florence! But, perhaps, the prevalence of those headaches had dulled her to his real state of feeling, had blinded her to his absence from home, had made seem reasonable to her the tales wherewith he accounted for his absence. Yet, of course, he told himself, he couldn't be such a beast as to hope for the continuance of the headaches!

On this particular Sunday Florence had one of them. She had appeared at the late breakfast table, looking rather pretty in her plump way, in a blue and lacy thing, and a coquettish cap to match. He had been forced to notice them, because she had asked him, rather wistfully, if he liked them. He had been quite profuse in praise of them when he had finally understood what she was driving at! But it was only a little while after breakfast that she had said she would go to her room—she felt a headache coming on.

He had idled around the empty house—Evangeline and Wade Robinson had been invited to a week-end at Tuxedo—waiting for the moment when he might appear at the Keiths'. He hoped that he might see Deborah alone; he hoped that the usual Sunday crowd of Hazelwood's livelier set would not be there. But even if it were, he wanted to be one of them. He wanted to see her dark, provocative glances, to hear her

racy speech, to feel the heavy current of his blood run quicker for her presence.

He arrived at the Ferguson house—how it had changed since the days of the Fergusons!—about four o'clock. Deborah was out among the gorgeous late marigolds and the chrysanthemums. Bertram, she told him, had just walked up to the new house with Mr. Ventnor and Mayhew, who had come out for dinner. She asked him to stay, also, and suggested telephoning for Florence.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she said, hearing of Mrs. Graham's headache. "Well, you'll stay, anyway. Will you follow the men now, or stay and talk with me?"

She sparkled mischievously upon him from beneath black lashes. Harry laughed delightedly.

"You need to ask me that, don't you?"

"One can never tell when one's vanity is misleading one," she answered. She was snipping great orange and yellow clusters into a flower basket.

"I guess vanity has never misled you," he answered. "Let me cut for you."

She handed him the big, Japanese garden scissors. Her fingers, soft as velvet, rested on his for a second. He made a clumsy effort to keep them for longer than that allowable period. To his surprise—for he had not always been unsuccessful in that venture—she snatched them away indignantly. Harry stared at her in sheepish surprise.

"Oh, I say!" he protested at last.

And to emphasize the protest, he grabbed her hand firmly and held it. Then he kissed the fingers, one by one, and then the pink palm. It was not the first time, and he took credit to himself for "calling her bluff" of matronly sedateness.

"There! Now will you be good?" he asked, releasing the hand, and smiling delightedly into her face.

For answer she raised that same velvety little member and gave him a stinging blow upon his red, full cheek.

"Do you understand that?" she demanded.

Offended and vigorous virtue lived in every line. Harry, his mouth open in surprise, the darker crimson from her blow stinging his ruddy face, stared at her. Even yet he could only believe it a move in coquetry.

"Why, you little vixen, you!" he cried, and caught her about the shoulders.

"Let me go!" she commanded, and there was that in her voice that penetrated to Harry's mind. He released her, and stood looking at her, more seriously now.

"Never dare touch me again!" she said angrily. Then, as he continued to stare bewilderedly at her, she went on, with sharp, decisive, unmistakable emphasis: "You seem to labor under the delusion that you may take liberties with me that you would not expect another man to take with your wife. Kindly get over that notion."

"But—but—" began Harry.

"You mean to accuse me of having allowed you to get the notion? You mean to say that I have flirted with you? Well, if I have, I'm through now! Is that plain?"

"I hoped," said Harry humbly, "that you liked me a little. I—I—why, you know you're everything in the world to me!"

"Rot!" answered Deborah vigorously. "I'm nothing of the sort. I'm a habit you've acquired—a bad habit—drink, drugs—whatever you please! And the difference between me and rum, or opium, or anything of that sort is that I am going to help cure you of the habit! You've got to give up presuming on my easy-going ways! You've got to get out of the habit of taking liberties with my fingers—"

"But you—" interrupted Harry.

"But I—nonsense!" mimicked Deborah. "Men of the world don't complain that they have been led on—that's the trick of yokels or of callow boys! If I have played a game, why—I'm through now! You see," she added deliberately, "I happen to be married to a man whom I love! A man who interests me! A man— Ah, well, what's the use of trying to tell you

about it? You, my poor Harry, are a good deal of a dullard. Lots of the men who have liked me have been that! I was loud and noisy enough to wake them up—that's why they liked me. That's why you liked me—because you're a bit of a dullard. But it gets to be an awful bore, playing with dullards." She favored him—hot, red, and furious—with a cool, appraising glance. "And so I am giving it up. Come up whenever Mrs. Graham can come with you. But don't think that I am going to go on supplying the pepper in your dish of life!"

"I judge," said Harry, summoning all his faculties for a crushing retort, "that Keith is interested in his wife again, and that that is the reason she is through with people for-passing-the-time. Well, my dear lady, when next he gives your affections a vacation, you will not find me waiting to fill in the hours until his resumption of them. I may be a dullard," he flashed furiously, "but I'll not play the fool for any woman twice!"

"Admirable resolution!" she scoffed at him. "Must you go? So sorry! Remember me to Mrs. Graham."

He jammed his hat on and marched down the flower-bordered path. Outside the gate he kicked viciously at the dead leaves along the sidewalk. Deborah, from the brilliant mass of bloom at the foot of the piazza steps, watched him with a mocking smile on her lips.

"He would have laughed his great 'haw-haw' if he had heard me tell of treating any one else that way—Mayhew, for instance. It isn't so funny when it's himself! I hope that fat little pudge of a woman will be duly grateful to me for sending her big donkey home to her. But she wouldn't be. If she knew, I'll bet a cooky she would only be angry with me for telling him the truth about himself!"

Harry did not go immediately home. He struck down the hill, away from the dwellings of his intimates. He was raw and bruised. He wanted to take his smarting hurt outside the sight of familiar eyes. He plunged down through the center of the town and out

into the country road. He was two miles from home before he recalled that he hated to walk, and never did if he could avoid it.

The October afternoon was uncomfortably warm for a stout, flabby gentleman unused to pedestrianism. He began to walk more slowly. Confound the woman! A vixen, that was what she was. Dullard, was he? Well, thank the Lord he hadn't been such a dullard as to marry a common flirt! Thank the Lord that he hadn't been such a dullard as to install on his heart: a light-minded creature like that, with no stability at all, but with a shrewish, spiteful tongue! Poor Florence! To think that he had neglected her for this virago, who played fast and loose with her husband's dignity, with her own reputation, with men's feelings—Ugh! It was abominable!

He came toiling back up the hill in the twilight. The arc lights shone upon a gentleman, heated, moist, tired, but thoroughly chastened. Deborah, with unerring surgery, had removed the disease, infatuation, by stabbing the inflated organ, vanity.

Florence was out on the piazza, sitting alone. She had muffled the telephone in order to avoid invitations and callers. She had sent all the maids out that they might not witness her loneliness, sting her with their unspoken pity. By and by, she would go in and get herself some bread and milk—she supposed that one must eat, must "keep up," no matter how one's heart was breaking. He, of course, would dine down at the brightly lighted, noisy, merry table of the Keiths'. Deborah would sing her French songs or do her Egyptian dances after dinner. The men would be flushed by her entertainment as by wine. And she, Florence, would, by and by, go to bed.

She heard a footfall along the asphalted sidewalk. She could scarcely believe it—it sounded like Harry's. It paused at their entrance. A big figure came slowly up the path. It was Harry!

"Hello, kid!" said Harry heavily. "How's the head? Better? That's good! No, I didn't stay there long—



For answer she raised that same velvety little member and gave him a stinging blow upon his red, full cheek.

been taking a tramp. We don't get enough exercise. I'm hungry as a hunter. What's for supper?"

Florence found herself shaken by the commonplace words as she had been

shaken long ago by his confession of love. She fixed her eyes, strained with much watching and sunken with secret tears, eagerly upon his face, dim in the twilight.

"Why—why, I don't know. Cold chicken, and salad, and cheese. I've let the girls all off—I didn't suppose—"

She paused; it would be tactless to spoil this home-coming of his with any words that might be construed as reproach; she would not say that she had not supposed he would come to supper!

"Bully!" said Harry. "I'll go up and take a shower and get into some dry clothes—it's a fierce climb up that hill—and I'll be down in a few minutes to help you set the table. Got any soda on the ice?"

"Yes," faltered Florence, staring after him.

He ran into the hall, switched on the light, and started up the broad, curving stairs. But he came back before he had climbed more than three or four. He came out on the piazza again, and stood awkwardly over her. Confessions, regrets, apologies, crowded to his lips. But he was not facile in earnest speech. He laid a big, clumsy hand on his wife's hair.

"Sort of like the old Sunday nights of our honeymoon, eh?" he said. "When the maids—we only had one then, though, didn't we?—were out, and you and I were by our lonesomes. Seems sort of good again, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Florence again. She laid her cheek against his hand with a swift, little movement of affection. He felt the tears upon it. Then she jerked away again. "Run on up," she said, in a cheerful, competent voice, a housewife's voice, "and I'll have everything ready when you come down."

"No, you wait for me," he commanded.

So Deborah Keith sent Harry Graham to his wife again, and so, over cold chicken and cheese, their reunion was celebrated. But whether it was counted unto Deborah for righteousness or not is beyond the power of the chronicler to tell.

CHAPTER XII.

"And so," concluded Evangeline, "he is going back alone."

She was sitting in Romola's room,

erect, robust, handsome, in her reddish-brown tweed clothes, that brought out the glorious reds of her hair, trimly coiled beneath her walking hat. She looked down at the tips of her heavily gloved fingers as she spoke. Romola, seated at her desk, with a half-finished letter to the children before her, watched her with agitation, pity, and guilt. Her friend's face was paler than usual, and a strained expression marred its healthy, wholesome good looks.

"But you will follow soon," she said, rising and crossing to the fireplace. She replaced a fallen log with the tongs—she wanted to keep her face hidden from Evangeline.

"So he says," replied Evangeline, evenly, sadly, but not bitterly. "So he says. But it is not so, Romola. I shall never go out there. We shall never be married. And he knows it, and I know it. But I suppose it is easier to break the thing off this way—inch by inch, instead of by one brutal blow."

"Do you—do you think he is so ill?" faltered Romola.

Her face was hot from the shame of dissimulation, and she bent closer over the flames to give apparent cause for the flush. Evangeline smiled.

"Oh, my dear, it is not that, and you know it! It is pretty plain that he cannot keep well in this climate, but it isn't just his health. Don't you suppose that, if he really loved me and feared—a fatal outcome—he would want me with him, would want my hand to hold to? Oh, I know there are high-minded men—sticks, I call them—in books, who would renounce love, and the women they love, and companionship, and everything, and would go off alone to die. But only in books. And Wade—Wade wouldn't be that sort even in a book! He's too—too—warm, too human-hearted. No. It isn't that. It is simply that he doesn't love me—you see, I have no pride. Of course, he's too kind-hearted to say so. But—after all, I am not a complete fool."

Romola's heart almost stopped beating. What did Evangeline's words mean? How much was suspicion, intuition, and how much actual knowl-

edge? She forced a smile to her pale lips.

"You are morbid, Eve, dear," she told the girl. "You are worried—that isn't wonderful! And you've brooded and brooded! Of course, *of course*, Doctor Robinson is in love with you! And, of course, loving you, and caring for your comfort, he wants to go out alone and make ready some sort of a place fit for you to come to, there in Arizona. Don't let all sorts of silly notions get into your mind. Don't let some little misunderstanding prey on you. Oh, lovers are the most foolish people! So jealous of their happiness that they are always watching and finding danger signals where there are none! A word, a look, and the world's undone! I'll be helping you pack your trunks before Easter. Perhaps he'll come as far East as—Omaha or Chicago, and you'll have the ceremony performed there. And—"

"Don't try to make me hopeful again, Romola," cried the girl, with a piteous quiver of her lips. "It's been hard enough, bringing myself to realize the truth and facing it. Don't help me to delude myself again. I knew from the beginning that he didn't care much for me— Oh, he liked me! He likes all women. He can't help having kind, half-caressing ways with them. But I knew it was I who—flung myself at his head, Romola. I am almost ashamed to say it, but it is the truth. I was so sorry for him—half sick, forced to give up the work and the standing in his profession he might have had! He seemed to me lonely and forlorn. I felt like a mother whose little boy has been left out of the picnic, when he stands looking wistfully after his mates, and whistling, and putting his hands in his pockets, and swaggering, to show that he doesn't care, until she has to gather him up into her arms. I felt like that! And I showed it—oh, quite unmissably! And now I am getting paid for my impulses! I don't know," she went on meditatively, "whether he loves some one else, or just doesn't love me!" Romola's heart gave a bound of relief. "He probably loves some one else, for

he's so—I suppose I might as well face the truth and say so weak—that if there were no one else, he'd be fond of me. It's his nature to be fond. And I—"

"And you're a woman to be fond of! You're a woman to adore," cried Romola. "You big-hearted thing! Only you're a goose, too, Evangeline! For he does care."

Inwardly she was declaring to herself with passionate intensity that he should care, that he should be made to care, that she, Romola Ventnor, would force him to love the girl he was to marry! He should marry her—there should be some happiness saved out of the general wreckage of life. Evangeline was right in her reading of him; he was easily swayed, easily moved to affection. Well, let his facile impulses be turned toward this big, fine, mothering creature here.

"When is he going to start?" she asked.

She had not seen him alone, she had not spoken to him, since the palpitating moment when youth and love had surged over again in his arms.

"The day after the Keiths' Thanksgiving party," Evangeline replied. She arose and stood staring listlessly out at the leafless trees on the street. "Well, good-by. You're an angel to listen to me, Romola. You who are so strong and self-contained yourself, it is good of you never to show any contempt for a weakling like me, who has to talk about her troubles. Or do you never have troubles?"

"Oh, the servants are incompetent sometimes, and Ralph will bite his finger nails," smiled Mrs. Ventnor. "But I'm an old married thing—I'm done with romantic troubles!" She kissed Evangeline's fresh cheek, and held her hands a minute, while her eyes looked very tenderly into the brown eyes of her friend. "Good-by, dear, and put away morbid notions!"

Evangeline smiled and shook her head with melancholy wisdom, and then her firm tread sounded down the stairs. Romola watched from the window until she saw the large, supple figure on the sidewalk, under the bare trees.

Then, with a gesture of determination, she went to her desk, and lifted the telephone receiver from the hook. With this sudden zeal for Evangeline's happiness, she felt strong enough to face Wade Robinson again, even with the palpitating memory of his kiss upon her.

She had suffered not a little since that moment when all the possibilities of weakness in her own nature had been made apparent to her. She had suffered, she had been shamed, humiliated in her own sight, and yet there had been a rebellious surge of joy in her blood. However she strove to busy herself, however she tried, with continual occupation, to blot out the stinging sweet recollection, yet again and again she lived that second. The busy housewife, standing on a ladder at her preserve closet, assembling her jellies in bright array, she had felt sweep over her again the wave of emotion that had enveloped her at the instant of his kiss. Even with Rose upon her knee, with Rose's prattle in her ears, she had felt it. She had known it again in her dreams. She had been possessed by it.

It had given her a new humility in her relation to Richard to realize that there was this possibility of lawlessness in her veins. The hard, harsh shell of criticism with which her heart had been cased for him was penetrated by remorse. He could never have been guilty of such weakness, such wantonness as this! She found herself watching him half furtively. It seemed to her that he must mark the change in her, must see, visibly before his eyes, the aura in which that moment of surrender had, to her own mind, clothed her—the fiery veil of passion.

But Richard had seemed to see no change; his eyes were, as usual, bent over plans; his forehead was dented by other worries than fears of his wife's affection. But his good, plodding, anxious ways, instead of being contemptible to her as they had been a short time before, began to affect her with pity and self-reproach. She was living through the familiar, the inevitable, period of upright souls who

first discover in themselves the capacity to injure others—the period of remorse, of humility, of admiration based rather on their new knowledge of their own unloveliness than on a new perception of the others' worth, of desire for lowly service. And yet across all this feeling of penitence and abasement would sweep the delicious, irrepressible tide of the emotion Wade Robinson had aroused.

Now, she told herself, with her hand on the telephone, had come her opportunity to retrieve all her weakness, to atone for all her wickedness. She used harsh language in dealing with herself—language that would have moved the robust laughter of Deborah Keith, could she have known the cause of Romola's self-castigations. A kiss, a flutter of the pulses, and all these heroics over that! How Deborah would have shrugged her shapely shoulders! But Romola knew herself, at least; she knew that, in comparison with her standards, she had been baser than it would be possible for a woman of Deborah Keith's standards ever to be!

But now she was going to atone for it all. She was going to command Wade Robinson, by his love for her, by her love for him, to keep his word to Evangeline Dimock, to make her happy. She knew, with a throb of jealousy smothered in the moment of its birth, that Wade would turn easily to some woman, once he was out of the range of her influence; see how swiftly upon his declaration of love for her had followed his engagement to Evangeline! No matter if Evangeline did assume the responsibility for that engagement now! No, he was not of Spartan stuff. He would make love to some woman—would love some woman—wherever he was. Well, it must be Evangeline, who cared with such protecting, maternal passion for him!

She gave the operator his number, trembling as she did so. She had not heard his voice since that night—she had refused to see him when he came to her house, she had avoided him at the houses of their friends. She had pleaded sudden indisposition when a

dinner at the Grahams' made it obvious that she would be forced to meet him at close quarters. She waited breathlessly for the reply to her call. She could have wept with disappointment when the burly voice of his housekeeper announced that he was not at home.

"No, there is no message," said Romola dispiritedly. "I'll call up again by and by."

She could have wept. And then, suddenly, she saw that, wearing the garments of benevolence, the most selfish of desires was at work in her. She had wished to hear his voice; she had wished to learn if the fever—the sweet, delicious fever—would mount higher at the sound of his mellow, caressing tones! She had wished to summon him to her—for Evangeline's sake, oh, yes! But, also, that she might know the thrill of his glance upon her, the fluttering of the heart, the dancing of the blood, that he could cause her. She had wanted, in short, as she told herself bitterly, yet with the ache of disappointment in her heart, to play with fire! Well, she was not going to indulge herself. She was not going to let her wanton impulses deck themselves out as self-abnegating duty to her friend, and strut about in that disguise! She settled herself sternly at her desk and read what she had been writing the children.

The telephone rang. She took up the receiver. And at the sound of the voice that came to her, the blood poured in a bright, joyful suffusion over her face and throat.

"Yes," she said. "It is I. Yes, it was I. How did you know? Oh, you guessed. Well—yes—I did want something, but I—yes, I do want something. I want to see you. Can you come in this afternoon about four?"

She tried to sound very impersonal, very businesslike, but a soft smile dented the corners of her mouth as she heard his reply. She put down the receiver, and pushed aside the letter. Surely, as he had said, there must be some subtle affinity between their spirits, since, after a silence of so many days—of weeks, even—he should have

guessed who "the leddy that wouldn't leave no name" was. Some forces in the world were too subtle for explanation, Romola told herself, some forces too strong for resistance!

She was of a dozen minds and a dozen moods before he came. She would command him to love Evangeline, to marry her, to take her West with him! She would do nothing of the sort! She would only delight herself for one last time with the sense of his nearness and his dearness. In two weeks now he would be gone from her forever! Why not see him as much as she could in those weeks? Why not drink this late draft of youth and joy to the full, and then face the barren years ahead?

She was as capricious as a girl about her costume. She arrayed herself with delicate care in a gown that she thought becoming. Then, ashamed, repentant, she changed again, back into the plain, blue serge of her morning dress. She would not indulge in even the allowable frivolity and charm of a tea gown, an afternoon dress. And then she saw, in her long mirror, that the straight lines of the severe serge accentuated her height and slimness, gave a more austere grace to her body than the fragile trimmings of the other frocks had given her; and that the dark color heightened the vivid glow of pink in her face, brightened her eyes.

"Oh, well!" she conceded to the impossibility of looking ugly. "It's not my fault."

She was shocked at the ravage that a few weeks had wrought in him, when at last he came. He was gaunter than ever, and more wasted. The feverish light in his eyes was not all of excitement at seeing her—she knew that. And all the self-consciousness, all the carefully planned dignity, all the half-hoped-for coquetry of the moment, passed from her in a rush of anxiety.

"How badly you look!" she cried. "Have you been ill?"

"That first snowfall of the season played the deuce with me," he confessed. "It caught me out in the Hollow. But I'm all right now. Don't let us waste time talking of me."

"You must go to Arizona at once! It's folly, your waiting here for any one's housewarming! It's absurd. Do—"

"I'm waiting to see you," he answered, with a dogged air. "I wasn't going out there to the cactus and the rattlers without one final vision of you to live on the rest of my life—of you, panoplied in gorgeousness. Ah, Romola!"

"What nonsense you talk!" she cried, with the impatience of a worried woman. "You should get out of this climate without any delay. Every hour you spend here is an invitation to sickness—"

"It's a prayer to destiny," he interrupted her, smiling; "a prayer that I may see you again. And behold how the prayer of the unrighteous is answered! Here we are, talking together. Suppose that I had run away after that first snowfall. I shouldn't be here with you at this moment."

"It annoys me dreadfully to hear you talk like that. I want you to go where you can live in comfort and safety, I want it dreadfully. And you make me responsible, in a sort of way, for your being here."

"You're not responsible; the kindly Providence that shapes our ends is responsible. But don't worry. Two weeks, which will probably be all mild Indian summer, will make no difference in my health. And then you'll see the last of me."

"And—and Evangeline?" She forced the question. "What are you going to do with Evangeline?"

"I am going to go on lying to Evangeline, my dear lady. I am going to go on letting her believe that my apathy as a lover is due to ill health, that my determination to go West alone is due to a considerate care of her comfort. And by and by, when you are a little less poignantly present in my heart, I shall write to Evangeline and ask her if she wants to come out to Phoenix, or if she has outgrown—"

"And do you think Evangeline is such a child that she believes all that you pretend to her? Don't you know that she

is a woman, and a clever one, and that all her intuitions are sharpened by her love for you? You are not deceiving her! She thinks that you do not care for her."

"So she has been talking over my shortcomings, has she?" He frowned a little. "Oh, well, what does it matter?"

"She has been opening her heart to me—to me!" answered Romola tensely. "And making me feel a traitor and a coward, as she talked! She had not one word of reproach for you. She blames herself for everything! And she thinks that your going away is going to be the end of your engagement. Breaking it off by inches, she calls it."

"She is clever," said Wade, idly and uninterestedly. "But surely you didn't want to see me, Romola, to take me to task about my treatment of Evangeline? Have we nothing better to talk of than that?"

He fixed his melancholy, humorous, bright, sunken eyes upon her. He smiled at her sadly, languidly. She felt her anxiety about him slip away; she felt the returning glow of youth steal upon her. It was almost an entranced feeling. Resolution seemed to dissolve before his look.

"She's a good woman," he went on, marking the effect of his words on Romola; "big, generous, loving. Too good for me, even if I had a whole heart or a whole pair of lungs. But since I have only a shattered frame; and no heart at all—ah, my dear Romola, she and I don't belong to each other! She knows it—you say she recognizes it, accepts it. Let us not bother about her. Let us think only how you and I do belong to each other, have belonged to each other all our lives, and God knows how much longer! Only you did not know it and did not wait for me; and so you put weights upon your wings—tied yourself down with ties I may not ask you to break. Else—the blue rapture to which we should soar together!"

"You must not talk so," whispered Romola.

He kept his eyes still upon her.

"If it were otherwise—if it were not for your children, Romola, I should



"Don't talk to me! Don't lie!" screamed Deborah, hurling a vase from the dressing table at her.

take you with me. You needn't start, you needn't awe me with the virtue of a virtuous matron! I'm not going to seize

you and to bear you away to my cave. But if you had no children, I should tell you the truth, and you would come."

"The truth?"

"The truth. That you belonged to me as I to you, and that the excellent Richard was but an interloper in our lives! That your heart answered mine, your pulses answered mine, your eyes, your dear lips—"

He bent over her. She had the sensation of sinking—sinking through fathomless spaces. She pushed him away with hands grown suddenly feeble. He straightened again, and went on:

"I should tell you the truth—that you must come with me; that you must leave him to his suffering, and come and face your own life, with all its destined sorrow and joy. Do you think I would bid *you* stay behind and wait until I had things fixed comfortably for you, if you were my mate—as you should be? No. I should know that what we might share together infinitely transcended comfort and peace. It would be joy and tempest, it would be sorrow and sunshine—it would be living!"

Creeping slowly, surely upon her, was a spell. She felt that if she opened her lips it would be to say that she would come with him. She tried to think of Richard as she had thought of him during the past few weeks—with remorseful appreciation, with new, kind perception. But she could not. Somewhere within her a voice that was neither hers nor Wade's kept saying: "It is fate." The children seemed vague and far-away little figures—she counted for less, and less, and less in their lives each year, as their father ordered their existence. And here was one who claimed her with the double claim of a lover and a sick child. She looked at him dreamily across a great space.

Wade Robinson, waiting, watched her. He had half believed all that he said. He had been swayed by his own emotions, tranced by his own half-hypnotic spell. Suppose she should come! The blood pounded dizzily against his ears at the thought. Women had cared for him before, and he for them, though never with this intensity. Women had shown themselves ready to give up what



they held dear for the dearer sake of his presence, though he had never yet asked any woman to leave what he was now beseeching, commanding Romola to leave.

The telephone jangled harshly. He jumped to his feet, Romola stumbled to hers, like one awaking from a sleep.

She moved toward the door. The spell was broken.

"Yes, this is Mr. Ventnor's house. A telegram for Mr. Ventnor? Mr. Ventnor is not here. I will take down the message—Mrs. Ventnor. I have a pencil. 'Cornwall, November eighteenth. Typhoid has broken out in the school, and the pupils not yet developing the disease are to be sent to their homes—' Wait, wait—"

The pencil fell from her fingers. Wade sprang to her side, seized the instrument, and, holding her with one arm, from which all suggestion of romance had passed, said to the operator:

"I will take the rest of the message. Yes—'Are to be sent to their homes. Your children will go to New York to-day in care of a teacher; can you meet them, Grand Central, seven-thirty-eight? Signed, L. J. Hood, Principal.' Yes, I got it all."

He finished writing the drawled words of the telegrapher. Then he led Romola to a chair, and pushed her back against a cushion. He was almost as white as she, but his pallor was informed by a look of alertness, of self-mastery. The passion and the pleading that had darkened his eyes were gone.

"I'll telephone Richard at once," he said, when he had gone to the dining room, and had poured her out a glass of sherry, which he forced her to drink.

"Richard is in Detroit," she answered nervelessly.

"That is all right. I will meet the kids myself. I'll get them bread and milk at the Belmont, and bring them home to you on the eight-forty. Romola!" He shook her gently. "Romola! You must not look like that, my dear girl. They are sending the children home because they are *not* sick—in order that they may not become sick. You must not be frightened. They are well—well! That is why they are coming!"

Romola, from the depths of the armchair, watched him out of lackluster eyes. The wine had brought no color to her lips or cheeks. It had not lightened her dull glance. Except for the

strained look of intentness on her face, she might have been in a swoon, might have been—Wade shuddered to think it—dead. He shook her again.

"Come, come, rouse yourself!" he cried. "Don't you want to get their rooms ready, their clothes ready? Don't you want me to call Mrs. Dockerty?"

"It is a judgment on me," she whispered. There was no inflection in her voice. So might an ancient oracle have spoken, without interest in the fact it declared. So might a machine have indifferently, relentlessly enunciated truth. "A judgment."

"Talk sense, Romola!" His voice was rough with the roughness of alarm, of anxiety, as hers had been sharp with him, earlier in the afternoon when she had first seen how worn and wasted he was. "Do you think that Heaven sent an epidemic to a school full of innocent children—sparing yours, by the way—to punish you for a fault you have not committed? I haven't such a low opinion of Providence. Believe me, Romola, it is not so lacking in justice and in logic as that. And even if it were the old, wrathful, personally spiteful God of our Calvinistic forefathers who sat up there—what have you done that He should 'punish' you? A judgment on you? My dear girl, you're—well, it is natural you should be upset! I won't scold you, much as you deserve it."

And then light and life seemed to come back into her face, though not the hope and cheer that he had expected to see follow upon his words. In the reviving expression, he thought he caught a tinge of something not unlike contempt—could it be for him? However, let her look at him as she would, provided only that she roused herself from her stupor. She vouchsafed no explanation of the glance that she bent on him. She only said:

"You are right. I must get things ready for the children. And can you meet them? It is very good of you. Are you sure you have no patients to visit, no calls to make?" Her manner was almost formal.

He smiled whimsically.

"That isn't a sarcasm, is it? I never

acquired many patients in Hazelwood—it is a healthy village for the rest of the population! And those whom I had I have transferred to Hodgson. I—it seemed better not to risk any more calls like the one that caught me in the Hollow the night of the storm."

She stood now, waiting—obviously waiting—for him to leave her. It was a strange ending to the afternoon that had begun with thrills and tremors, with idle dreams suddenly crystallizing into wild hopes. But he felt in himself as great a change as the one that he marked in her. He had been too long a physician, too long a healer alert at the call of hurt and ailment, to play the disappointed lover now.

"After all," he told himself, as he boarded the New York train at the little Hazelwood station—a stone Gothic structure, of which the suburb was proud, standing among denuded, geometric flower beds, and bare shrubs—"a man ceases to be himself when he adopts a profession. It remakes him. It is him. And to think that I may not go on in mine!"

It was of that loss rather than the loss of his love that he thought as the train rumbled cityward.

CHAPTER XIII.

Two days before the Keiths' housewarming, Deborah, with a small army of workpeople aiding, was commanding, countercommanding, arranging, rearranging, decorating, planning. The party, she had declared, would "wake Hazelwood up"; and she was bending every energy toward fulfilling her boast. Local resources had been exhausted; the two Hazelwood florists had done their best, and then the New York florist and Deborah had consulted together to better that.

The Hazelwood caterer, who bitterly averred that "the best people of our community have found me good enough for all their most important functions," had waited, at first expectantly, then hopefully, then yearningly, to be summoned to confer with the busy hostess. Now that he knew that his dreams of

providing what he called a "recherché collation for the élite of Hazelwood and the adjoining suburbs, including New York," were but dreams, and that his were not to be the pâtes and salads, the ices and rolls, the coffee, and bouillon, and champagne, to allay the pangs of hunger of the said "élite," he comforted himself by recalling cheerful cases of poisoning from arsenical bonbons, of ptomaines lurking in alien truffles and pâté de fois gras when home talent had not proved sufficient for the givers of banquets in the village. He was, he said in this latter period of his feeling in regard to the Keiths' party, not altogether sorry that he had not been chosen to feed the two hundred guests whom Deborah was reported to have invited to her festivity.

"Not very good pay, the Keiths," he said. "I shouldn't be at all surprised if Marini & Tosti had to sue for their money. That is something I dislike to do—especially with a Hazelwood customer. It's bad business to get a name, in a small place like this, for pressing your patrons. But sometimes it's the only way. On the whole, I'm satisfied that Mrs. Keith didn't think it best to engage me."

It was not only the material part of the feast that was expected to outshine all that Hazelwood had hitherto known. Rumors flew about to the effect that Deborah was planning wonderful entertainment. There was to be dancing—not only the general round dancing toward which the youth of Hazelwood looked happily, but fancy dancing. Deborah herself was understood to have originated a dance for this occasion that would make all her other performances negligible. Some of the other women whom her first exhibition of terpsichorean skill had driven into the ranks of the amateur fancy dancers were to appear, so said the same unauthenticated rumor.

And the great male impersonator, Daisy Burdette, was to "do a turn." It seemed that Mrs. Keith knew her—Mrs. Keith knew the queerest people! But then, added gentle and hopeful Hazelwood, on the *qui vive* with ex-

pectation, that was what made it such a pleasure to go to her house; one met so many interesting characters whom one was not in the habit of meeting every day; it broadened one—one was so apt to grow narrow, in a little place like Hazelwood. She—Mrs. Keith—seemed to know lots of theatrical people, didn't she? Not Ethel Barrymore and Forbes Robertson, and those, but—er—more obscure people; but they were interesting, were they not? One wondered—musingly—if she had ever been on the stage herself.

It was while she was giving orders for the screening of the musicians' gallery, at one end of the big ballroom—Hazelwood had gasped with delight over that ballroom, such seemed its promise of a new era of entertaining, a new standard of entertainment!—that her new footman approached her deferentially.

Deborah had set up men servants with her entry into the new house; she said, with a proper sense of the fitness of things, that the huge pile of stone and cement demanded men in livery. She had designed the livery herself, and was particularly proud of the cardinal lining to the plum-colored coat tails. Nothing, she had pointed out to Bertram, could be quieter, more dignified, than the plum color, and then the flash of red came like a hint of diablerie, a flash of gayety, a touch of—oh, of something not tame and dull! Bertram had acquiesced without any keen appreciation of the fine points of the costume, or of its hidden suggestions. He was much absorbed, much involved, in business in these days.

The footman approached her. Deborah frowned at him impatiently.

"Well?" she snapped inquiringly.

"Beg pardon, ma'am," said Plum-color-and-cardinal, who had already had salutary taste of the quality of his mistress' tempers, "but Mr. Keith's office wants to speak to you. They wouldn't give me the message, ma'am."

Impatiently Deborah withdrew from her conference with the florist's men. She went to her room, closing the door behind her, and turning off the connec-

tion in the booth downstairs. Bertram had installed at the new house a telephone system almost as complete and as reticent as that in his office, and had instructed Deborah to observe its seccrecies. It was his voice that greeted her now. He began by asking her where she was, and if she had disconnected the main telephone. Something in his tones banished the impatience from Deborah's breast, and filled her instead with a frightened excitement. She answered that she was in her own room with the other telephone connections locked off. Then she listened, growing white as she heard. Her husband spoke to her rapidly in French.

"There has been trouble here," he told her. "I am practically in hiding for a while. It is thought that I have gone to Baltimore, and that is how I happen to be safe in the office. Hartly is under arrest. I shall be compelled to keep out of sight for twenty-four hours or so. By that time the whole foolish affair will be adjusted. It was some highfalutin nonsense that appeared in one of the circulars which laid us open to the charge of using the mails to defraud. I don't know how it got by me. However, I can have the whole matter arranged by to-morrow evening. Certainly you are to go on with the party—more than ever! I don't think that Hartly will be held—it is too slight a charge, after all. But I can't come home just yet. You are to go on as if nothing had occurred—nothing *has* occurred, if one comes to that! To all questions, I am in Baltimore. You expect me home the day after to-morrow. Now be a sport, Deb!"

"I will!" answered Deborah, as solemnly as if she were repeating a sacred pledge. She came away from the table slowly, eyes downcast, cheeks aflame.

"This house! How I hate it!" she cried. "If only I hadn't been such a fool as to want it, as to demand it, we might have been free and foot-loose! But, fool that I was, I wanted the stupidest kind of respectability to flaunt in other women's faces—the biggest house, the most servants—ugh! Oh, well! Bertram will come out all right,

as he did out of that affair in London, and Hazelwood will swallow whatever we do, just as I meant it should, just as I always said any dead-and-alive, eminently respectable hole would stand anything, provided it were trimmed off with enough money!"

Her head was erect again. She marched back to her conference with the florist's men, and ordered a little more wildly, a little more extravagantly than before.

There were telephone messages all the rest of the afternoon. Miss Burdette telephoned to "dear old Deb" to ask if she might bring an associate in art—a gentleman who was "simply immense" as a female impersonator; they would together, she said, "do a screaming turn!" Deborah recklessly bade her bring her friend. The caterer in town telephoned that a delicacy that Mrs. Keith had insisted upon could not possibly be forthcoming—"the French boat is delayed, is twenty-four hours late; but would not such and such a substitute do instead?" The substitute was the more expensive. Deborah ordered it. *Cecile et Jeannette* telephoned that they would send their head fitter out to Hazelwood that evening with madame's costume of cloth-of-gold and sapphire chiffon; but the head fitter could not make the last train before seven o'clock, and there was not another that would enable her to reach Hazelwood before nine, thereby making her return to New York very late.

"Tell her to take a taxi," said Deborah, and hung up the receiver.

The Hazelwood danseuses came in for a final rehearsal. Deborah was the gayest among them—she was always that, of course! But she gave them hints, instructions, examples; their dances gained in a witching grace under her inspired tuition. She rang for Plum-and-cardinal, and commanded that he bring champagne instead of tea to refresh her friends after their exercise. Some of them faintly protested, but Deborah was not to be resisted, and they drank a preliminary health to the new house in the amber, bubbling beverage which Deborah tossed off in a

way that somehow reminded them of Bacchantes and other ladies deemed lawless in Hazelwood's code.

She felt tireless. She felt unafraid. Her nature, which demanded the stimulation of fierce emotions, throve upon the excitement, the danger, that Bertram had revealed to her. She looked about upon the rich new dwelling, upon all its evidences of the approaching festivity, and she smiled to feel that she could, without much pain, turn the key in the great lock in the broad hall door, and slip away with her husband without a qualm of regret; indeed, with a lively expectation of more excitements, of more keen delights elsewhere! But how would Bertram feel? For all that conscienceless quality of his, for all that outlawry of his temperament in business, she knew that he had curious and inconsistent hankерings for respectability, for—

Again the busy telephone. She was in her room. She wondered which of her guests, which of her hirelings, it was this time. She smiled as she took down the receiver.

"Yes, this is Mrs. Keith," she answered in her deep, rich voice. "Oh, the office! A telegram for Mr. Keith, you say. Oh, he ordered all telegrams telephoned out to me? Very well, I'm ready. He wants a record kept? Go ahead."

The half-mocking, half-triumphant smile was on her lips as she took the gold pencil attached to the vellum-bound pad on her desk. She wondered if this message would be from some associate, warning Bertram of peril, or from some irate purchaser of Open Sesame stock demanding explanations. As she repeated and wrote down the address, she inclined to the latter belief. "'Colorado Springs, Colorado, November twenty-sixth.' Yes, I have that." Lots of the purchasers were Western people. "'Ralph is very ill; no hope. Can you come? Signed, O. Keith.'"

She repeated the words with automatic precision at the dictation of the clerk at the other end of the wire. She concluded the conversation decorously.

"Yes," she said, "I think I have it right. I'll repeat it to you. 'Colorado Springs, Colorado, November twenty-sixth. Ralph is very ill; no hope. Can you come? Signed, O. Keith.' Yes, I'll give it to Mr. Keith the instant he arrives!"

But she arose from the instrument with blazing eyes and features distorted by rage.

"Here! In this country! How dared she? How dared she? And he—he knew! He has been hearing from them—seeing them! Oh, the liar! The coward! Not to tell me! To dare to trifle with me! That explains his moodiness, his melancholy! That explains his references to past peace and quiet! Oh, I could kill him—all of them! To trifle with me!"

She rang her bell imperatively, furiously. The maid who came flying on the summons she turned upon in a white heat of anger. Why had she been so slow? How dared she delay? The girl stumbled into some reply, some denial, some excuse.

"Don't talk to me! Don't lie!" screamed Deborah, hurling a vase from the dressing table at her.

It was a little fluted silver thing. It struck the maid on the forehead, broke the skin. Blood trickled from the wound. She ran screaming through the halls. But Deborah, wholly beyond control now, paid no attention. With savage joy, she was flinging the expensive breakables in the room upon the hearth. The sound of splintering glass and crashing pottery was borne through the broad new corridors. Timid servants crowded beside the door. None ventured in. Finally the laundress, a big, rawboned Irishwoman, cried:

"What are ye standin' here for, like stocks an' stones? She's drunk or crazy, I suppose, but ain't the whole of ye had to manage drunken men in your time? I'm goin' in before she does herself some damage."

And she boldly pushed open the door and entered, the others crowding behind her.

The sight of the destruction she had wrought had quieted Deborah for the moment. Her dark eyes were blazing in her white face, but she had ceased to fling breakables upon the hearth of terra-cotta tile, or against the gray marble mantelpiece. She turned haughtily toward the intruders.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded. They all fell back abashed except the laundress.

"Sure the noises was enough to bring us," she asserted, unquelled by her mistress' demeanor. "No person but one in a fit makes such a crashin'. We come to see what ye needed!"

"Well, now that you see I need nothing at present, perhaps you will be good enough to withdraw again. Order me the car around, some of you. I am going in to town. Here, cook, give that to that fool, Annette." She crammed some bills into the cook's hand. "She got between me and my target, and I think she hurt herself. I'm sorry. Tell her to buy court-plaster with that. Mollie, you may stay and help me dress," she added to a chambermaid.

They retreated again before her sudden command of the situation. Annette's trifling little abrasion of the forehead had ceased to bleed, and she jocularly laid a five-dollar bill against the scratch, and pronounced it entirely cured.

And in a few minutes Deborah was speeding to town, in quest of half a dozen things—of a sedative for jealous fever, of a poultice for agonized grief, of revenge—oh, of quite a dozen intangible things that she needed.

She knew only one sort of place in which to look for all these—the noisiest restaurant, the liveliest "show," the gaudiest supper room. She collected her crowd easily enough—there were the great Burdette and her comrade in artistic endeavor; there was Mayhew, for the late supper—he had less bohemian engagements for the earlier portion of the night; there were a callow young millionaire and a chorus girl who twinkled resplendent in diamonds that he was supposed to have



"I am better than I have been for years," he stated, firmly, aggressively.

given her. There were people enough, and noise enough, and laughter enough, and wine enough to have drowned out almost any other sounds. But all the endless evening Deborah kept hearing the voice of her husband's clerk repeating a message that began: "Colorado Springs—"

She finally left them all abruptly. She pleaded her own party two nights following as an excuse for hurrying

home while the night was yet young, according to Mayhew, who had certainly qualified as an authority on the age of nights. She declined the friendly Miss Burdette's offer to accompany her. And all the way back the motor hummed to one tune:

"Suppose he has gone back to her, to them? Suppose he has gone back to her, to them? Suppose he has gone back to her, to them, to her, to them!"

CHAPTER XIV.

There was a new and curious competence about Romola in the days immediately following the return of the children from school. Evangeline Dimock explained it to Wade Robinson as the joy of a mother who has regained her children after absence.

"She missed them more than she seemed to," said the young woman. "Funny, isn't it, that we shouldn't guess how she wanted them until she got them back? But she has always been so wonderfully self-contained about her griefs and annoyances—not secretive, exactly, but too—too—dignified—or kindly—to obtrude them. So that it's only by her pleasure in things granted that you can gauge her pain over things withheld."

Wade looked a little doubtful. He was not sure that the universally explanatory quality of maternal love accounted altogether for Romola in her present manifestation. He noted that her eyes were shining, not merely with the light of motherly affection, but with a confidence, a hope, that he had never seen in them before, even in the days when all the children had been with her. Her tread was assured, buoyant. She walked like one with a sure and joyful goal before her. And he felt, obscurely, that the brief and fervid passage between them that the homecoming of the children had interrupted was closed forever.

He could not have made love to this new Romola; she had never, he said loyally, invited love-making, but now she forbade it; she went panoplied against sentimentality, against passion; and yet her armor was not harshness, was not unwomanliness. He could not quite make it all out. It interested him without paining him, and without arousing any resentment of wounded self-love in him. Curiously, there seemed to have passed out of him also, on that night, the fever of emotion that had possessed him before.

He had been in love often enough in his career, and had happily recovered from the malady; but never before had

the passing of the disease left him with a deepened admiration for the object of his attachment, a deepened interest in her point of view, her mental and spiritual processes. No; as a usual thing, when he fell out of love, it was with a profound weariness with the lady, or with a profound distaste for all that she had come to represent.

"Is there any danger of the children's coming down with typhoid?" Evangeline had asked him when she had learned of the return of Ralph, and Paul, and Lucy.

"It may possibly develop," replied Doctor Robinson. "Of course, I don't know what the cause of the epidemic was. If it was in contaminated milk or drinking water, we should have to allow a full period of incubation to the germs, from the last time the children drank the milk or water, before we could pronounce them out of danger. But I dare say they'll be all right. Richard Ventnor has demanded an analysis of the water supply both at the school and at the dairy that supplies the school with milk. I dare say all the other parents have done the same thing. He is horribly broken up over the occurrence. I met him yesterday, and when he thanked me for having gone in to collect the kids that night, he almost broke down. He lives in them. I think he cares more for them than for his wife, even. He's a queer fellow."

"I think Romola did not want them sent away from home. That probably makes his feeling acuter and more complicated."

Evangeline was watching her fiancé rather intently. It seemed to her that there was a new quality in his talk, in his glance, in his whole manner. It was not more affectionate—he had always been sufficiently affectionate in his lazy way—but it was a change that lightened her heart with hope.

It was a mild, Indian-summer afternoon, and they were out on Florence's piazza. Florence herself was taking a harp lesson; in the changing world, Evangeline thought, not the least marvelous transformation was that of her indolent, easy-going sister into an al-

most-active, almost-alert young matron. Harry, too, had come home to stay, apparently. And Florence was actually making an effort to keep him at home. The harp, for example—he liked music, he had always particularly admired the harp.

"And my arms are rather good," said Florence, with a half-pathetic, half-complacent glance at the satiny, tapering forearm revealed by her negligee when she wistfully confided to Evangeline her intention to learn to play the harp as a "surprise" for Harry! Today a familiar little air was twinkling down from Florence's sewing room, converted for the time being into a music studio, to the piazza.

"That's some old college thing she's playing," said Wade, dropping the subject of typhoid fever. "Something we used to sing in the glee club—what is it?" He hummed the tune, and gradually the words fitted themselves to the melody.

"How can I bear to leave thee?
One parting kiss I'll give thee,"

he sang. Then he looked up to see that Evangeline's big, faithful brown eyes were full of tears.

"Why, my dear!" he cried.

She burst into a storm of sobs, hiding her face against a cushion in the swinging chair in which she sat. She did not withdraw the hand that he patted soothingly.

"Oh, I am so ashamed to make you a scene like this!" she cried breathlessly at last, emerging, tear-stained and disheveled, from the cushion. "Truly I am! I—I never meant to play the baby. Oh, why did Florence have to go and learn to play the harp?"

He started to say something about the parting's being as hard for him to bear as for her; something about the briefness of their separation. Then he remembered all that Romola had told him of Evangeline's forebodings—intuitions—on the subject. He would not be able to bring peace to her heart by any formalities, by any subterfuges. He hated to see a woman in distress, especially a dear girl like Evangeline. He

bent over her tenderly, and smoothed her hair. That was noncommittal; it fitted in with his general philosophy of action. In a second or two, perhaps, the right word would be vouchsafed him. If she really wanted to come—

Upstairs the harp stopped. They heard Florence's voice in telephonic communication.

"Wade!" she called cheerfully down the stairway. "It's you that is wanted. At Romola Ventnor's. Can you step down the street? She's worried about Ralph. They generally have Doctor Gerstyle, but he's away, and Richard dislikes Hodgson. She thought you were here—you'll go, of course?"

"Of course!" said Wade.

"You'll come back to dinner?" she called after him, appearing on the piazza as he started down the drive.

"Thank you, I am ashamed to come again to-day—but I shall, since you ask me," he replied.

He was halfway down the road toward the street, and he turned to smile his thanks. The sun glinted through the side screen upon Evangeline's hair, and warmed her soft, round cheek. She was a handsome woman, Wade realized for the hundredth time, but with a sort of possessive tenderness and pride in the realization now.

Romola was a trifle pale with anxiety, but the new certainty, the new assuredness of her bearing was still noticeable. In her direct eyes there was no recollection of surrenders almost made. All her thought was for Ralph, but alarm had not destroyed her poise.

Wade listened to the boy's symptoms, examined him. He looked grave at the end of the examination.

"Well," said Romola, when they had come out of the lad's room, "is there any ground for my fear, or is it merely the result of injudicious indulgence ever since he came home?"

"I'm afraid it's serious," answered Wade. "What has Richard heard from the school?"

"There was a case of typhoid last spring in the family of the farmer who supplies the school with milk—just a single case! It seems as if the water

supply must have become infected, and the cows drank from the impure streams. That is the latest theory—held by every one except the farmer, who denies everything, except that his niece came up from the city, and succumbed shortly after to typhoid, which she had evidently brought up with her. But what shall I do?"

"When will Doctor Gerstyle be back?"

"He's off on a vacation that won't be over for two or three weeks. He goes off into the woods late every autumn."

"You don't care for Hodgson?"

"Richard wouldn't have him in the house."

"Well, I'll take charge until—until Gerstyle comes back—or Richard decides on which of the other men he would prefer. I—you see—I'm due to leave in less than a week—four days now. But, of course, I'll stay if it seems better for the boy than to change physicians in midstream, so to speak."

"You mustn't do that. You must not change your plans on our account. I asked Florence to send you only because I knew that you were there, close at hand, and I was frightened. I hoped that perhaps you would only say that I had let him read too much, and eat too many sweets since he came home—which I know I have! Had I better engage a nurse?"

"Better be on the safe side," replied Wade. "I've found Miss Middleton invaluable. She's not on duty anywhere now—I met her this morning. Unless you have some one else in mind?"

"No, I like her. Will you send for her? And will you tell me just what to do?"

He telephoned for the nurse. He gave his directions for the care of Ralph, for the observation of the other children. Absently, half unconsciously, he marked the efficient way in which she managed everything.

"Poor Richard!" Romola said, with a little rush of softness, when all the preparations for the siege had been made. "Poor Richard! It will nearly kill him. You see—" She hesitated

a second. Then she went on: "We differed about sending them from home. He was afraid during that meningitis scare we had here. He thought a school would be better. I am so sorry for him."

Wade looked at her curiously. She had spoken sincerely. There had been no hint in her tone of the sense of triumph, of proved judgment. It was evident that she was simply and wholeheartedly sorry that Richard should have to carry, in addition to his intense anxiety as a devoted father, the burden of a feeling of responsibility. Her own alarm, keen as it was, apparent as it was, was subordinated to her realization of the remorse her husband would have to endure.

As he stood looking at her, watching intently the fine, beautiful, clear-cut face, with its little air of detachment, it came into his mind to test the completeness of her withdrawal from him.

"May I speak of myself for a minute?" he asked, and she brought her eyes home from a vision of Richard, broken by sorrow and scourged by self-flagellations. But those eyes met his unfalteringly; the color did not dye the pale cheeks.

"I am very selfish and self-absorbed," she said contritely. "Of course, you may speak of yourself. You have something to tell me?"

"Yes. I am going to ask Evangeline to marry me, and to go West with me at once."

The mystical look of power and mastery that had been about her ever since she had come out of her first trance of terror, on learning of the children's danger, deepened into positive joy.

"Ah!" she cried. "I am so glad! I am so glad! Have you—had it, too—the revelation?"

"The revelation?" echoed Wade stupidly.

He was bewildered, almost frightened. Romola's starry eyes shone upon him across the room.

"It was like a revelation to me," she said simply. "Though, of course, that is a large word for a little thing. But I seemed suddenly to see the meaning

of life—of my life, at any rate. I seemed suddenly to grow up. I thought—I thought—perhaps, you, too—”

She broke off and looked at him with vague question, as one looks at a person from whom one hopes understanding.

“No. I had no revelation—except through you,” he answered her. “I confess that, watching you these last few days, things that once seemed important seem so no longer, things that once seemed fervently to be desired have moved into the realm of the remote, unreachable, impersonal things. But I have had no revelation. I have only seen you through a new medium, as it were. I wish—I wish you would tell me what you mean?”

“I will try to.” She frowned in the intentness of her desire to make her meaning plain. “It has been like this with me: I have wanted to live forever in a romance, but I wanted it the same romance. You understand? I wanted always to thrill and be thrilled as when—as when Richard and I were first engaged. But never with—ah, never flirtatiously, lightly! I thought I could keep that first romance as it was. I resolved that I would admit no jarring things into our intercourse with each other—that everything should be ideal, beautiful, so that that lovely and ideal first relation of ours should never die for want of its own atmosphere. I may never have reasoned it all out, clearly, and reduced it to language, as I am doing now, but it was on that principle that I ordered my life.

“Meantime Richard went on working hard in his profession—getting ahead. We had the children, we had more and more of the simple good things of prosperity. And then, suddenly, quite suddenly, I waked up to the fact that nothing I had planned was true any longer. The shell was there, but the living body had escaped. Romance was as utterly gone as if we had killed it with clubs, had silenced it with quarrels and outrages generally! I felt cheated. I did not know how it had escaped me. Of course—I blamed my poor Richard. I looked at him critically

to see just how he had killed romance! Oh, I found a thousand ways in which he had killed it, and I resented them, every one, and I resented him! I wanted it! I wanted it! You see I had not much to do, I was so well housed, so well served. Even the children were scarcely an occupation for me.”

She paused. There was a dreamy expression on her face—as if she half pitied the woman who had not understood life and her own heart. He waited, listening for the revelation.

“Well—you came. I was eager for romance, as eager, more eager than a girl. At least I thought I was. I craved it—craved its excitements, its satisfactions. You know?”—she looked at him squarely now, and the blood dyed her face—“you know how near I came to making an ignoble shipwreck of—everything—in that desire. Well, when I learned that my children were in danger, had been in danger, were coming home to me—at first I had some old, horrible, barbaric notion that God was punishing me. And then that cleared away, and I had a swift vision of the truth. It was not the excitement, the satisfaction of romance that I craved—it was excitement, satisfaction, of the sort that belonged to me by right—the excitement and satisfaction of occupation, of emotions as normal to my age and to my experience, as romance is normal to the girl who has not had it. Do you see what I mean? I hope you do. I—I—feel that I owe it to you to let you see what is in my mind.”

“I see dimly what you are driving at,” he answered. “You mean—”

“It was this way,” she interrupted swiftly in her anxiety to be understood: “Suppose that by some queer abnormality I should have been restless and miserable because I no longer experienced the joys and raptures of a child, or because I no longer had the same sort of filial love, and was no longer visited by the same sort of parental love, as when I was eight? You see I should have been an impartially developed person—perhaps a real defective. Well, it is incomplete develop-

ment, it is a belated adolescence, a pitiful immaturity, that makes women who have had love and marriage go on whimpering for the same thing year after year! If Richard and I—if any man and any woman—were the same in their affections and their attitudes after ten or twelve years as they were at the beginning, they would be defectives—wouldn't they? Minds incapable of growth? And for me to whine for romance, and to envy a woman who apparently had it alive and vivid in her relations with her husband—it was like whimpering for Santa Claus and dolls, and envying Rose her shy fairies. It has all grown quite clear to me these last few days. And the first flash of it came to me that day when we heard that the children were coming home."

"Tell me more," he commanded her. He, too, felt on the verge of some great, important discovery.

"That is all." Her flow of eloquent explanation ceased suddenly. "That is all. It may not be true, but it is true for me. I feel grown up at last." She smiled a little whimsically. "You could never guess how often a woman creature feels grown up. First when her dresses drop below her shoe tops, then when she does up her hair, then when the first boy says something loverlike to her—Oh, how grown up she feels then! How initiated into all the mysteries! And then when she is engaged, and then when she is married, and then when her children are born. But after each great discovery of maturity, she drops back again and feels much as before—until the next new discovery puts her—forever, she thinks—into the ranks of the truly mature. Ah, well! Maybe we'll never be grown up until we reach heaven. But I have been feeling these late days as if I were finally facing life from the seats of the elders."

"And love," he said slowly, "is like a childish toy to you now?"

"No!" she cried, in swift answer. "Not that. You must not misinterpret me. Only that love, too, grows up as we grow, and that to be a woman seeking the raptures of girlhood in her love

is to be no better than the poor things one sometimes sees in out-of-the-way places, who have the full-grown bodies of men and women, and the wits of little children. That is what I mean. It is clear to me, even if I cannot make it so to you. And now that I know that—and I confess I had to make almost a fiasco of my life to learn it—now that I know it, I feel that other knowledge is to be added to me—that somehow I shall learn how to fill my days and my thoughts with the new occupations and the new ideas that belong to me, just as each of the 'growing-ups' before has brought its own activities."

They looked at each other strangely.

"And I, who have dangled after women—you see I tell you the truth—and who have played with loving, and who have loved after various fashions—I seem to you as pitiable as the village idiot?"

He spoke rather harshly. He did not altogether relish *Romola*'s new philosophy, although he felt almost convinced by it.

"I spoke only for myself, only for women. I don't know anything about men," she answered. "But you mustn't try to make me doubtful of my revelation! I—I intend to live by it."

"I don't want to make you doubtful of anything you may have the good luck to believe in. Rather I want to become converted wholly to your belief. I'm half converted. I appreciate all you say about the raw adolescence of half the 'affairs' we are called on to witness. But—there is love, there is passion, after all! Your revelation, my dear lady, is not going to eliminate them from the world. And they are not to be cabined, cribbed, confined, within any boundaries of time, and space, and circumstance that you may choose to set for them."

"I know that there is love, and that there is passion," she replied. "I don't make any claims or set any rules except for myself, and for women like me. We have not been starved, thwarted, stunted, in any way. And for us to go on, trying to capture a second and a third time, trying to chain an emotion



It was Richard, kneeling by the bed, his head bent upon his hands as if in prayer.

we have already had in its due course, is ugly and silly. I've known two or three women in my day who had a poverty-stricken childhood—who never had as many toys as they wanted, or always wore made-overs. And when they came into money, by and by, they have made a dash for the nearest toyshop or the nearest dressmaking establishment, and have taken an overdose of what was denied them in their infancy. Well, if they keep on overdressing, or playing with their dolls and Noah's arks, they are not the quaint,

whimsical, original figures they imagine themselves to be. They are fools, and tiresome ones at that!"

"I see the analogy. Here comes Miss Middleton." He arose to go. "I think I have something more to thank you for than all I knew I had before—I think I have to thank you for helping me to grow up. I'll look in to-night when Richard is at home, to see about the change of doctors. Meantime——"

"Meantime give Evangeline my dearest love!"

Her steady, assured eyes were shin-

ing, her handclasp was the handclasp of a comrade. He went forth pondering, and, with bent, deliberative head, walked toward the Grahams'. It was still in the lap of destiny—his own future, he felt. Certainly there was something to be said in favor of that "grown-up" view of *Romola's*. Yet—if only he had met her in the days when love and romance belonged to her legitimate life! If only he had met her twelve years ago, before Richard Ventnor had married her! If he had, she would not now be having these strange revelations, she would not have been finding the fulfillment of life outside of romance, of that he was conceitedly certain!

Evangeline, big, glowing, soft—a great, fragrant rose of a woman, a million-petaled rose wide open to its golden heart, sat beside the lamp in the Grahams' living room. She was dressed in white, as she had often been during the summer. He marked—his eyes had the habit of always marking feminine loveliness—the firm, white roundness of her neck above the filmy laces of her bodice.

"Well?" she asked him eagerly.

"Well," he answered, moved to kiss her for the mere wholesome beauty of her body, as one is moved to kiss a child for its sheer youth. "Well, will you marry me and go West with me?"

Evangeline shrank away from him. Her big eyes grew wider with amazement, and a sort of protest.

"But—but—" she faltered.

"Ah, say yes! I'm a selfish beast to ask it, but if you will come, it is the last selfish thing I shall ever ask of you!"

"But I didn't think you really wanted me!" The girl's lips quivered, but her eyes met his unflinchingly.

"I do want you," he answered. "It was childish, sentimental, story-bookish, to talk of waiting, to talk of fearing to subject you to hardship. Will you come?"

"Of course, I'll come! But I want to know what is the matter at *Romola's*."

He told her, and she murmured soft words of sympathy and affection.

"I care for her so much," she told him. "More than for any woman I ever knew, except Florence. I owe her so much—all sorts of things! Actual services as well as intangible, little things—examples, and all that! Why," she laughed softly, "I owe her you! If you hadn't been her old friend, I might not have met you for months—until you were engaged, or married, or something, to some one else. For you would have been engaged or married, Wade! You're the sort of man who can't help being in love! Yes, I owe her you!"

"If I were all you owed her, you might some day learn to doubt the worth of her friendship," he said. "Ah, well! I hope to Heaven you'll never have reason to regret owing her me!"

CHAPTER XV.

Deborah's housewarming was in full blast. Hazelwood and the adjacent country, to say nothing of New York, had contributed some of their liveliest, if not their most eminent, citizens to the revel. The frock of cloth-of-gold and sapphire was a dazzling marvel of the costumer's art. Deborah, flashing above it, was bewildering, radiant. Bertram, contrary to bets laid against his appearance by the sporting element of the community, had welcomed his guests with his imperturbable air of passive hospitality. Evidently, the men told one another, the paragraphs in the papers a day or two ago, announcing the raid upon his offices and their occupation by federal authorities, had been exaggerated; or else Keith had been able to "fix things up." Certainly, no man seriously concerned by a charge against him of using the United States mails to defraud could wear so perfect an air of mild enjoyment, of unexcited pleasure. And for the rest, it really gave an added fillip, an added zest to the already exciting possibilities of Deborah's party to realize that there might be a warrant out for the host, or that he might be present only through the

courtesies and conveniences of the bail system.

Deborah, when her husband had come home an hour or two before the hour set for their reception, had looked at him eagerly, keenly. Had he received the telegram? Had he been in communication with his office? He had called her the day before, and she had suppressed the message. Now she showed him other messages telephoned out during the two days of his absence—messages in cipher for the most part. He read them attentively and, retiring to the booth and snapping off the general connection, talked for half an hour with his office.

She was trembling with anxiety when he emerged. Had the confidential clerk in the office told him of the telegram from Colorado Springs? Suppose he should come out knowing that his son, Ralph, was very ill—what would he do to her, who had concealed the information? For the first time in all her relations with him, Deborah felt afraid. She was sure that she could not summon up her old defiance to meet his rage. Jealous she was—furious with jealousy! But she trembled at the thought of the icy blue look he might bend upon her when he came forth from the booth.

The endless half hour passed. He came out. There was a look of relief on his face. He mopped a forehead damp with the strain of agitation and uncertainty.

"That's all right," he said to her, a little thickly. "The federal men have been withdrawn. They didn't find a thing in the shop to warrant them in holding any one. It makes the secret service look cheap. They have been doing some foxy work. They have hired people to write and to send money buying stock. But our replies were masterpieces—without the original letters to which they were answers they were as harmless as milk, as harmless as rules for making mush! Well, they had the replies—and they took possession, expecting to find the rest of the combination—the letters to which the replies were dictated—"

"I don't understand," Deborah had said.

"Can't you see? Suppose you write to me on the fourth of December and say that you are inclosing two dollars to pay for cocaine or something else that I am not allowed to sell? Suppose that I write to you on the sixth, saying that I am in receipt of your check and your order, and that I will send the hair tonic as soon as possible. Don't you see that unless your letter is in the hands of the authorities my reply may be useless to a prosecutor? Without the original orders, our replies were harmless, as far as we were concerned—at least for the time being. We have some legitimate stock to sell!"

"And you didn't have the original orders in the office?"

"Not in the office," replied Keith, with a faint smile. "Not in the office." He emphasized the place. "So, my dear, let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow they will probably issue a new charge."

So he didn't know yet of Ralph in Colorado! He should never know, she declared to herself! Never, never, never! Why should they intrude upon her happiness, that first family of his? Had he not chosen? Had he not cast them off for her, for her, the glowing, vivid, irresistible woman of his mature choice?

"Has she no pride?" cried Deborah to herself. "Has she no shame, that she should try to win him back in this sneaking, cringing way?"

And then the lights began to glitter through the house, and the orchestra in the turn of the stairway to tune up, and the orchestra in the ballroom to make ready, and the waiters in the supper room to try the patience of the butler, and the maids to fly hither and thither among the apartments of the overnight guests, and the performers whom Deborah had engaged. And she shook her graciously molded shoulders to shake off the anxiety that had been burdening them, and met her guests with gay, cordial smiles.

"Dear Mrs. Graham! How well you look! How that peach color becomes

you—may I say it? And are you better? When last I heard of you you were having such horrid headaches! Oh, I am so glad! And you are looking better, too."

Her eyes flashed merrily, mischievously, into Harry Graham's stubbornly direct ones. Harry would have been glad to slink by her unnoticed; he had vainly tried to beg off from the big party. But Florence, naturally, had no intention of foregoing her triumph. He was anything but comfortable under the raillery he felt in Deborah's words. But he was determined to bear witness to the truth.

"I'm better than I have been for years," he stated, firmly, aggressively. "I am on the water wagon, I'm keeping decently early hours, taking regular exercise—Flossie and I are playing golf again."

"What energy! And what virtue! But it seems to agree with you. Ah, *Evangeline*"—Deborah managed to push the Grahams along the line, and to extend her hand to the girl who followed—"I hear the jolliest thing about you! Is it true? Doctor Robinson, you're a sensible man—it isn't safe to leave pretty girls around and think they are yours because you've ticketed them! Miss Dimock—Miss Burdette! Miss Burdette, Doctor Robinson. Daisy, be a lamb and introduce some of these people to Parry and Paine. Yes, Mrs. Brewster, they are Parry and Paine, *the minstrels*, and they have consented to do us a turn by and by. Oh, how nice it is of you to say that—but there's nothing very original about it!"

She heard her husband talking to Doctor Gerstyle.

"Thought you were in the woods? Glad to see you back, though."

"Thank you. I couldn't miss Mrs. Keith's at home, you see. Besides, I had to come to take care of little Ralph Ventnor. It shortened my holiday only a few days, and Robinson had made all his plans for leaving. Yes, typhoid. Didn't you know? No, I'm afraid they won't be here this evening."

Deborah was impatient with the physician for speaking of illness, especially

of Ralph Ventnor's. She knew that her husband had a particular half-furtive fondness for the boy and for his mother, and she knew the reason for the fondness. It was too annoying that the note should be struck to-night—of parenthood, of responsibility, of rooted affections, rooted duties! She dragged Doctor Gerstyle away to introduce him to the wonderful Miss Burdette, whom the Hazelwoodians were meeting in a spirit of excitement and daring, and whom they were surprised to find clad in the usual habiliments of her sex.

The evening wore on. Music sounded. Dances were danced. In the smoking room the men congregated to swap stories, and to drink whisky and soda, and every now and then Deborah sent some youth, too young, too much enamored of some fair one to be himself a hanger-on in smoking rooms, to break up the group, and to scatter it throughout the house.

Miss Burdette, on an improvised stage in the ballroom, did her "turn" to the gasping delight of the crowd. Parry and Paine did theirs. The dancing ladies of Hazelwood did theirs—a little less sinuously and easily than professionals, perhaps, but with great self-satisfaction. And then Deborah herself appeared, a Bacchante in flying scarves, colored like grapes—green, and black, and purple, and red. There were grapes in her hair; there was a vine-wreathed bowl in her beautiful hands as she began her dance.

Bertram Keith, watching her from the back of the room, felt the surge of life, the sting of flame, that the sight of her dancing always gave him. But close upon it followed another feeling, which he did not so easily define. After all, one did not want that kind of thing from one's wife! It was with a certain stiffness that he answered the compliments of the man next to him upon Mrs. Keith's marvelous dancing.

One of the plum-color-and-cardinal attendants of the house touched him on the elbow and murmured something to him. The man next him did not hear what, but Keith turned with a quick word of apology and left the room.

Deborah's dancing was over, all the performances were over, the band was playing simple waltzes and gallops for the old-fashioned youth of Hazelwood, who were trying the new ballroom floor with evident approval. Still Keith did not return. Deborah, whose eyes on this night were strained in his direction, marked his disappearance before any one else had commented upon it. She invaded the smoking room in search of him. He was not there.

"Out on the piazzas somewhere, flirting with a pretty girl—Oh, *I* know him!" she declared gayly.

But the stone-balustraded porches failed to show him as she made a hasty tour of them. Indeed, it was too nipping a night for any one to flirt out-of-doors—the one blot upon her party, she felt.

She questioned a plum-and-cardinal bird. Yes, Mr. Keith had gone to the telephone booth about half an hour ago. He himself—Plum-and-cardinal—had brought the message.

"Who on earth can be telephoning at this hour of the night?" Deborah demanded with asperity.

"It was Mr. Kenton, ma'am," said Plum-and-cardinal. "An' he wouldn't be put off."

The confidential clerk! Her heart gave a somersault. She went swiftly toward the booth, but it was empty.

She looked hastily through the house. Bertram was nowhere to be found. She went back to her guests, hating them, wishing them to be gone with an intensity she had never felt for anything before in her life. But the bands still played, the champagne still flowed, the spirit of revelry knew no sleepiness. A tipsy-looking wanton of a moon was reeling down to the western horizon before the late stayers began to disperse.

When finally the last of them had gone, leaving inquisitive adieux for their host, she rushed to her room. Annette awaited her.

"Have you seen Mr. Keith?"

For answer the girl handed her a note. She tore it open and read:

My son is dead. You kept back the knowledge of his condition from me. I shall never

forgive you. Anything else I could have forgiven, but not that. I might have reached him. The knowledge that I was on my way would have kept him alive. I shall not forgive you.

That was all. She stood, twisting the piece of paper in her hands, her face drawn and old, anger, jealousy, despair, molding it anew. Then she turned fiercely on the girl.

"Why do you stand there staring like a fool?" she cried. "Undress me—undress me!"

And when she fell asleep, it was with chloral by her bedside.

At the same hour Romola, waking from an uneasy doze in her room, slipped out of her bed and went to Ralph's side. The night nurse was reading in a little room off the boy's. She shook her head in soft reproof at Romola, but did not prevent her entrance.

The shaded light was very dim; the bed was all in pale shadow. The brown head of the sick boy dented the pillow. But there was another darkness, farther down the coverlid—another head upon it. It was Richard, kneeling by the bed, his head bent upon his hands as if in prayer. He heard the soft stir of her long garments, and looked up. His face was almost strange to her in its anxiety, its pain, and—yes, its humility! He rose to his feet and joined her at the low footboard. They stood together, looking at the sleeping child.

When they turned and left the room, Richard stopped her, with his hand upon her arm. Turning, she saw his eyes, hurt, bewildered, questioning—the eyes of a child who does not understand.

"Can you forgive me, Romola?" he asked. "Can you—can you ever love me again?"

It was as if Ralph himself were speaking. And suddenly she saw that the essential quality of woman's love is not the desire of the woman for her mate, but the tenderness of the mother for her children; and that the first of these is her husband. Dimly, largely,

there glimmered before her eyes the vision of love reaching out in widening waves from the center of the mother and the child of her flesh, until the whole world lies against her protecting breast. She put her arms about her husband, troubled and questioning before her, and she said:

"Oh, my poor boy! My poor boy!"

She lay long that night, staring sleeplessly out at the stars. Her heart was at peace. She felt the assurance of her little son's recovery, she felt a new era of life opening to her and Richard. There were to be no more unoccupied days, no more deeply dissatisfied hours. To mother the whole world as far as one's love could reach—what space did that task leave for idleness, for weariness of soul, for restless yearnings? Even that drawing of hers toward her old playmate, what had that been but motherhood and pity stirring in her, and misunderstood by her?

At last she fell asleep, and Richard, coming to her door at daylight, saw her smiling as she slept.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was not until the affair of the Keiths had passed out of the province of the daily papers, and had reached the more leisurely, more gossiping Sunday columns that Hazelwood really understood the matter. Meantime, of course, they had known a good deal—known it with avid interest, known it with horror, known it with pity, according to the various natures represented in its population. Some, learning it, turned them more closely to the close-knit ties of home, and drew into the shelter of its sacred tenderness as into an asylum; some shuddered and quaffed the waters of forgetfulness; some, with sharp tongue and envenomed glance, told how they had always known evil of the Keiths, had always prophesied disaster to them.

The events following the spectacular housewarming were rapid, and even more spectacular. Deborah was awakened out of her drugged sleep by Annette. She roused drowsily, blinked,

crossly asked for an explanation. There were officers in the house, she was told, who demanded to see her, to see her husband. Deborah was broad awake on that information. She dressed rapidly, and went down the splendid stairway. It was guarded at the foot, she noticed.

Courteously enough, the man who met her explained that he was a federal officer armed with a warrant for the arrest of Bertram Keith on the charge of fraudulent use of the mails. He asked to know if she had any idea of her husband's whereabouts. He explained that another person had been arrested in Keith's office, as Keith, two days before, and had not made known the error. When the mistake had been discovered, through the anxious quest of the imprisoned man's wife, officers had been immediately sent to apprehend the real Keith. Inwardly, Deborah, learning the victim's name, said: "Good old Hartly!" Aloud she said nothing.

"We know that he was here last night," she was told. "We have reason to believe that he is still here. No train left Hazelwood after the time he is known to have been here. He did not leave in the cars of any of the guests. It will only delay matters and prejudice his case for him to persist in hiding when he is certain to be caught at last. His case has already been prejudiced by a foolish piece of trickery that he practiced in concealing certain evidence, since unearthed."

Deborah's mind was confused. Should she show Bertram's note? Should she let the opinionated nonentity who was advising her imagine him hidden in the house? Perhaps that would be better; the time wasted in searching it might enable him to make good his escape, if that was what he desired. So she said, in a way to carry no conviction, that Mr. Keith was not at home, and that she had no idea where he was.

Would she excuse them for searching the premises, the officers desired to know? She appeared reluctant, sulked, pouted, acted the sly, dishonest wife of a refugee from justice very well. The search began, was proceeding unsuc-

cessfully, to the growing annoyance of the searchers and the growing amusement of Deborah—she even pictured herself, at some future date, amusing Bertram with an imitation of it—when one of the plum-and-cardinal brigade came running in with fear-bleached face and starting eyes.

"What is the matter? Don't you know how to enter a room?" demanded Deborah sharply.

"Oh, ma'am; oh, ma'am!" gurgled the man affrightedly.

She heard a steady, slow tread in the hall behind him. She dashed to the door. The chauffeur and the gardener were walking at the head, and two strange men at the foot of a long, sheeted Thing that they carried. With mouth fallen open, and staring eyes, she looked from them to It, from It to them.

"Oh, ma'am! oh, ma'am!" they said, repeating Plum-and-cardinal, "go back, go back!"

When she finally saw the dead face of her husband, it seemed to her to wear a cynical smile, as if, in retiring to the shrubbery to shoot himself, after that last talk with Kenton, he had half contemptuously, half kindly said that it would be a shame to spoil Deborah's party.

As has been written, it was the Sunday papers that later gossiped entertainingly over the whole affair. London correspondents, reading the news of the suicide of one Bertram Keith, a shady promoter of worthless stock, on the night when his new five-hundred-thousand-dollar "palace" was the scene of a great festivity, and chancing to note that the same date bore the small death notice of Ralph Keith, son of Mrs. Muriel Keith, in Colorado Springs, rummaged among the files, looked up divorce-court records, talked with one another, and finally pieced together the whole story as Hazelwood read it later.

It was the story of a young Englishman of good family, the son of a well-placed and highly respected clergyman, who had taken what seemed to him the easiest path to affluence—the forming

of companies to promote the sale of this and that stock. He had made a good deal of money before he passed from doubtful securities to securities of undubitable badness.

Meantime he had married early in life a girl of whom the correspondents spoke with highest praise—the beautiful daughter of an officer with a brilliant record for service, a woman of cultivation, charm, and refinement. But with Keith's financial laxities came another, the correspondents gravely declared. He became a dangler at the shrine of a dancer more widely known for her indiscretions than for her terpsichorean success. The infatuation had lasted two years before the wife, Muriel, learned of it. It was a complete infatuation; Keith wished to marry the woman, who, to be quite just, had thrown over the rest of her little court for him, and who appeared to be as mad about him as he was about her.

Muriel Keith finally consented to seek a divorce, her husband supplying her with British prerequisite—a blow. His family rallied to the wife's support, his Spartan sister sitting with her throughout the uncontested proceedings, and taking her abroad with her boy as soon as she secured the decree. Keith had then married the dancer, and they had disappeared from the world of London theaters and restaurants for the past two or three years.

He had next emerged in America, playing the old promoting games, but playing them, apparently, less skillfully, more clumsily, than in England. At any rate, he had never there been actually liable to arrest, merely in somewhat bad repute. The new house, the splendid new equipment on which the American newspapers had dilated at the time of his suicide, were evidently the outgrowth of an unsuspected desire for a respectable and wealthy setting on the part of Mrs. Keith, number two, of whom no one had ever suspected such a weakness as a bourgeois desire for respectability, though she had long been addicted to expensive habits.

They commented, the astute newspapers, on the curious coincidence that

his suicide should have trod so closely on the heels of his son's death. Kenton, on the witness stand, at the inquest, had suppressed that part of the message that he had telephoned to his chief on the tragic night. He could not bear to blazon to the world that intimate bit of the history of the man he had served. It was the wreck of his fortune, the ruin of his reputation, that had driven Keith out to die, the commentators all agreed. After all, they said wisely, he was born an English gentleman, the son of an English gentleman—naturally he would prefer death to the sordid dishonor that inevitably awaited him!

But to Miss Keith Kenton wrote the truth, and she told it to Muriel, who somehow found in it something to soften her heart, to assuage the awful pain and loneliness of her spirit.

For a little while the great house was known as "Keith's Folly," after the immemorial custom. The more sensitive part of Hazelwood avoided it in their walks, the more vulgar sought it out. But by and by some eminently rich and eminently respectable and rather markedly elderly persons bought it, and it acquired a new reputation for intense stodginess and dullness, and Hazelwood was held to be purged of the evil that had once abode in it.



The Cruelty of Miss Crews

MISS LAURA HOPE CREWS had as her co-star in the brief run of "Blackbirds" H. B. Warner, the son of the famous English actor, Charles Warner. And frequently, when she wanted to raise a laugh at his expense, she told this story:

Mr. Warner got his start on the stage with Beerbohm Tree through Tree's friendship for the older Warner. The son was a great athlete, and on one occasion entered a regatta on the Thames. He talked about it so much to Tree that the manager at last consented to see him row his three heats with his competitor for a handsome silver cup.

Because of the pressure of his work, Tree was able to see only the first two heats; and that night, when Warner showed up for the performance, Tree sent for him. The actor, knowing what was coming, tucked under his arm his valued trophy.

"Young man," asked Tree, evidently interested deeply, "how did that race come out?"

"Here's the cup," said Warner proudly. "That proves I won."

"Gracious angels!" said Tree, in an apparent ecstasy. "If you could only act as well as you row!"

Our Bookshelf



A Little Talk on a Few of the Books of the Day

By Edward Everett Hale, Jr.

ONE of the most striking elements in the American fiction of the last half century is what has been called "local color." From the time that Bret Harte began his well-remembered tales of the Forty-niners, there have been many American stories and novels whose particular aim has been to present the atmosphere, the life, even the dialect, of some particular part of the country. And of such books there are none more interesting than those that present phases of life in the South.

Many will remember Mr. Cable's collection of pictures of New Orleans—"Old Creole Days" and "The Grandissimes." These pictures of a romantic, but quickly vanishing, phase of Southern life were followed by a series of Southern studies very different, but equally interesting. Miss Murfree, under the name of Charles Egbert Craddock, began the publication of those novels of the Great Smoky Mountains that are to-day so well known. And after Mr. Cable and Miss Murfree came others who will be well remembered—Thomas Nelson Page, James Lane Allen, and Joel Chandler Harris. Nor should we forget other studies of the South not by Southerners, such as Mark Twain's beloved "Huckleberry Finn."

To-day there are many novels of the South. Not all of them, however, are

stories of local color. Many of them are representative of another more recent type of American fiction, the historical novel. The South has always given us historical novels, from the days of Kennedy's "Horseshoe Robinson" and Simms' "The Yemassee," down to John Esten Cooke and George Cary Eggleston. So we have to-day "John o' Jamestown," by Vaughan Kester (Bobbs-Merrill Company), a story of the early days of the Old Dominion. This, we might add by the way, is a good historical novel, but it is evidently a type of fiction in which Mr. Kester is by no means so much at home as in his earlier work. But most of the historical novels of the South to-day are stories of the Civil War. And of these, as is natural in this year of the semicentennial of Gettysburg, most are connected in some way with that crucial struggle in the nation's history.

GETTYSBURG.

Of these the place of honor belongs to the series of stories by Miss Elsie Singmaster called "Gettysburg" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), which present glimpses of the battle itself, and of its results fifty years after. It is a noteworthy book. There are those who say in defense of the great evil of war that though it certainly is in itself an evil, yet it pays for its ravages many times

by the noble character and feeling that it brings forth in a nation. It would be hard to think that there is no other way of gaining such good save by such evil, and yet one will surely be surprised as he reads this slight volume to see what a range of passion and feeling—pathos, heroism, humor, fear, tragedy, almost the whole gamut of human experience—is here shown rising to perfect expression at the great opportunity of war. And it is all done very simply—in the story of a woman whose husband was with the army, of a boy in the ranks who longed to see his mother, of a widow who listened to the historic words of the great president.

There have been fine things written about the battle of Gettysburg before. The best examples in fiction are the account of Pickett's charge in "The General's Double," by Charles King, and that of the cavalry skirmish on July 3d, in the same author's "Between the Lines." The latter has been called by Lord Wolseley, who had some knowledge of such matters, "the most perfect picture of a battle scene in the English language." It certainly is a fine account; indeed, both are fine accounts. Yet both seem a little spectacular, a little conventional even, when compared with the classic simplicity of these short sketches of Miss Singmaster's. It is not that Captain King—the old title sounds more natural—did not know the lights and shades of war. It is rather that he had not the imaginative mind that could conceive truly expressive figures—the distracted wife who listens to the trooper who warns her to take to the cellar; the stately and heroic self-sufficiency of the young aid-de-camp who watches the approach of Pickett's division; the gray figures in the early dawn rising from the quiet streets of Gettysburg at the word of the Confederate general, to follow him back to the confines of the Confederacy.

Cavalry skirmishes and infantry charges have been the subject of military writers since the days of Cæsar. But a new genius will perceive new phases in the great kaleidoscope of war. We wish of this book only that it were

a novel rather than a collection of stories. It is true that the short story has its own beauty as well as a longer work—no one will say that the humming bird is not beautiful because it is not a peacock—but the final impression of a great novel—in spite of the opinion of our great story writer, Poe—is greater than the impression of a short story. And so with "Gettysburg," one cannot but regret that the mind that perceived so keenly and expressed so surely, should not have felt equal to the task of molding such separate sensations into one great and adequate whole.

WAR.

Among the war books, and with at least one intense page on Gettysburg, is John L. Long's "War" (Bobbs-Merrill Company). It is an unaccustomed view of war that Mr. Long's idyl gives us, not of its drums, and its trampings and conquests, for these sound only in the distance, or, if close at hand for one fierce moment, they soon die away.

It is the story of a comfortable Maryland farmer and his boys, living in the débâcle ground, themselves always loyal, though harboring with perfect liberality a rebel cousin and spy; known throughout the army for their hospitable kindness to soldiers, and their invariable filling of haversacks, and yet somehow never feeling that the war is their war, or that they have any reason to enlist, until by force of absolute accident the opportunity presses and forces them out. Then their real love of country shows itself.

Admirably contrasted with these quiet, calm, deep-feeling "Pennsylvania Dutch" is the fiery, enthusiastic German editor, who raises a company, sells his newspaper to provide his men with uniforms, goes proudly to Washington to offer his services to "Father Abraham," and falls at Chancellorsville a fortnight later.

It is a charming romance without a doubt, perhaps more like a delicate decorative painting than anything else—the fat, fertile farming country, with the comfortable farmhouses, the loving

brothers whom not even love of woman could separate, the woman lifted out of herself by love, and bound by the circumstances that she had herself created, the background of Union army, and secessionist sympathizers, and rebel spies.

But there is a difference between Mr. Long's idea of war and Miss Singmaster's, and if one wants to know what it is, let him compare the realism of the cavalryman in the frontispiece of "Gettysburg" with the romance of the picture of the charge in "War." Or let him compare the horses' heads, if nothing more.

THE LOST DESPATCH.

Reading on in the Civil War books, one comes upon "The Lost Despatch," by Natalie S. Lincoln (D. Appleton & Co.). It is certainly not a great book, but it will undoubtedly be read with interest by many; in fact, it may easily be read at a sitting, which in itself shows that it is good stuff.

It is a combination of detective and Civil War story. As a detective story, it is not the equal in imagination or in ingenuity of the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes or Arsène Lupin. It has not so much cleverness, nor is it so well constructed, for it huddles up its conclusion in a remarkable way. But it sustains the interest almost to the very last, and, certainly, till the moment of disclosure, no one could guess what the outcome is to be.

As to the Civil War element, it is a very curious combination of strength and weakness. It is in part quite conventional and in part truly real. There are still living those to whom the time of the Civil War seems practically contemporary. But actually, and in the minds of most people, the Civil War is already history, and a novel dealing with it is a historical novel just as much as if it dealt with the war of the Revolution.

In costume, manners, and language, the people of that time were different from the people of to-day, different with a faint, but perfectly perceptible, difference. Miss Nancy Newton, with

her overskirt, her full underskirt, and her hair drawn back over her ears, is as much an historical figure as Abraham Lincoln, with his stovepipe hat and his old gray shawl; "Her bright smile haunts me still" is as historical as "Maryland, My Maryland"; the horse cars on Pennsylvania Avenue are as historical as the smuggling of quinine. So, also, is, or should be, the language. And here I imagine that Miss Lincoln has committed some oversights, though it would hardly be worth while to enumerate them. She has also erred historically in assigning to President Lincoln several stories that, though venerable as stories, belong to the postbellum period.

Such distinctions are not idly made, but serve to point to what grows more and more of a fact with every year—that to present the actual life, the real atmosphere of that heroic epoch in our history is a task as difficult as it is noble. The day is past when one can write of the Civil War as one would write of one's own time. To present those wonderful days now, we need either the instinctive imagination of genius, or some forgotten tokens of the actual thing itself. "The Lost Despatch" does something for us here, more, I believe, in the latter way than in the former.

THE LAND OF CONTENT.

"The Land of Content" (D. Appleton & Co.), is also of the South. Miss Edith Barnard Delano, who tells us of it, is not very particular in her topographical details; perhaps she does not want to make her land of rest too easy to find. But indications show that it must be somewhere in the mountains of Berkeley County, West Virginia.

Here a young doctor of genius has gone in search of health, after too much hard and brilliant work; but health being gained, he finds that the place has such a hold on him—or perhaps it is the people—that he stays on and on, and makes more and more secure the place he has in the hearts of the shy mountaineers. Here, also, comes Miss

Rosamond Randall, rich, but dissatisfied with the world of leisure. She is led to stop in the first place by an accident, the running down of a child by an automobile; but she, too, is held by the charm of the place and the people, and settles there for the winter.

There are not a few good pictures of nature, but the most truthful pages in the book are those in which Rosamond realizes the difference between her life in the society of the great city and here among the few families whom she sees in the mountains. At first, like the conventional nature lovers of all the ages, she thinks that the existence of the city must be empty, hollow, and without reality, while the simpler life of the mountains is full of pulsing vitality. Later she sees things at a somewhat different angle. "Life, she told herself, was, after all, pretty much the same wherever it was lived . . . if she had not found sincerity of purpose and singleness of aim among her earlier friends, it was because she had not learned to look for it. She had only chosen the easier part, not the higher; it was easier to be sincere and simple in the mountains than in town, where life was more crowded. It was she who had been at fault in not finding in the old life what was more plainly to be seen in the new." And finding that life depends largely upon the one who lives it, she tries more earnestly to gain its greater experiences.

It is a good story; the author is not without the power to touch the sources of human emotion and feeling. More than once one finds oneself saying: "This woman understands life."

THE HEART OF THE HILLS.

Miss Delano touches upon one of the most interesting things in American life to-day—the reentrance into national life of the mountain white. But she views the mountaineer from the outside. Mr. John Fox, in the "Heart of the Hills" (Charles Scribner's Sons), goes to the central point of the question. In his new story we have the mountaineer as he comes down from the hills into the

more general life of the State and the nation. This is not so romantic a matter as some we might think of, but it is really more vital. Jason and Mavis Hawn, the mountain boy and the mountain girl, come down from their feud-ridden fastness to the blue-grass country for education at Transylvania University, just as hundreds of boys and girls actually do come down every year to Berea or Lincoln Memorial.

It is an immensely interesting subject, for the book brings in actual and well-known political events and conditions, such as the rallying of the mountaineers to the capital of the State, and the shooting of Governor Goebel. Here, perhaps, Mr. Fox is not so much a master as when he deals simply with the individual relations of his characters. The epic character of a historic period is no easy matter to handle.

We have a surer touch when the story is actually in the heart of the hills than when it passes to the blue-grass farm or the campus of the university. Mr. Fox doubtless does not want to be held strictly to the kind of story with which he made his first success. Why should a man always write about the mountains? After all, human life and character cannot be very different in mountain and in plain, and the greatest men, one would say, give us human nature with the least limitation of local conditions. All that we may allow, and yet feel that Mr. Fox is at his best when he deals with the steeps and coves with which he has already made us most familiar. Perhaps there is no place in America to-day better worth writing about than the Southern mountain country, no place that will better pay for whatever thought we can give it. And there is no one who can write of it better than Mr. Fox.

THE VALIANTS OF VIRGINIA.

But the most characteristically "Southern" novel is "The Valiants of Virginia," by Hallie Erminie Rives (Bobbs-Merrill Company). It certainly has all the well-known elements. The scene is a fine old estate, with its

splendid manor house, its enchanting ballroom—the yellow parlor with the wonderful dancing floor—its spacious, old-time hall and staircase, its gardens, with terrace and sundial, a legend over all the State. The people, too, are there—charming Shirley, with her burnished red-gold hair; her intense and delicate mother; the old major, of course, and his friend the doctor; Uncle Jefferson, the white-haired old darky; and John Valiant, the New Yorker, who has come back to the Virginia of his fathers.

It all makes a very charming combination, as characteristic of Virginia as a mint julep or a Fauquier County ham. Doubtless the objection will be made that it is conventional and sentimental, and so on—just a story “of the kind of life one reads about in the novels of the South,” to use the words of the author herself—and that may be true; we sometimes feel as John Valiant did when he first got into the neighborhood of the family estate, and said: “If the color-photograph chaps had shown us this we simply shouldn’t have believed it.” But, after all, there are times when any one likes such views of life, romantic though they be, if they be really well done. And here the thing is well done. Plot and setting are certainly harmonious; the story would be an impossibility anywhere but in Virginia—Shirley feels that she cannot marry the son of the man who killed in a duel the man whom she thinks her mother loved. And it must be allowed, too, that when the story gets well started—it takes some time about it, to be sure—it continues with real tenseness and suspense to an unexpected end.

A SONG OF SIXPENCE.

We ought, for the sake of variety, to speak of some book not of the South. Which shall it be? “The Flirt,” by Booth Tarkington (Bobbs-Merrill Company)? That is the story of how a sadly conventional coquette—violent, hysterical, egotistical—got let in by a slightly less conventional confidence man, and of how her Cinderella sister finally quietly married the quiet young

man in the background. Or, perhaps, “The Lovers of Skye,” by F. W. Allen (Bobbs-Merrill Company), would be better. That is a pleasant idyl of two nice, but idle, young people who are so happily and obviously in love with each other that they get all the people of the village to stir to flame the fires of affection that have been smoldering for so many years. Or shall it be the “Devil’s Admiral,” by F. F. Moore (Doubleday, Page & Co.)? That is a first-rate adventure story of a man who gets put by pirates under the battened hatches of a sinking ship in the China Seas, and of how he finally manages to get out and round up the pirates.

Better than either of these, and a better contrast, too, is F. A. Kummer’s “A Song of Sixpence” (W. J. Watt & Co.), for this is a book on a problem. Mr. Kummer is interested in the woman problem, as they call it, in at least one phase of it. Of course, this is not a very distinctive subject; all novels are contributions to the woman problem when read by men, and would be contributions to the man problem, if there were any, when read by women. But Mr. Kummer found himself involved in no less a question than this: “Which, after all, is likely to prove of more material value to a woman in the affairs of life, physical beauty, or beauty of character?”

Emmy Moran begins in Gainsville, Ohio, in poor circumstances, except for a beautiful body and a piquant face, and, after a career in which her strong card is physical attraction, she ends as the wife of an English peer. One might infer from this that in the affairs of life she had done well. But she writes a letter to her Sister Katie, who has married a hardware clerk in Gainsville, and has had children and a happy home, and from the letter it appears that Emmy has not got all that she wanted. Obviously she has not got the man she wanted. She had been in love with a novelist, but by constantly playing fast and loose, she lost him forever. So she thinks herself unhappy.

But I do not think that Mr. Kummer really answers his own question.

He lets us believe that Emmy, with her titles and her millions, is unhappy, while Katie, with her hardware clerk, and Janet, who married the novelist, are happy. But that is hardly an answer to the question, and even if it were, it is not at all a convincing answer. Happiness is far too simple a matter to depend on such complicated things as marriage or money. Emmy was of the kind who would never have been happy in any real sense, and probably Katie and Janet, though in the long run what would be called happy women, owed whatever happiness they had to temperament rather than to circumstances. But the book is interesting, whether or not one agrees with its conclusions. Fortunately there is not much of what might have been, in such a story, the main element. There had to be a little of it, but undoubtedly Mr. Kummer did mean "to tell a plain, straightforward story," as he says himself. At any rate, he has held the balance pretty true.

THE HEART OF A SOLDIER.

And we may end with mention of a book full of the spirit of the South, which will be as eagerly read as any of the novels of which we have spoken. This is "The Heart of a Soldier, as Revealed in the Intimate Letters of General George Pickett, C. S. A." (Seth Moyle, Inc.). General Pickett, as every one knows, commanded the Virginia division of Longstreet's corps, which was picked out by Lee, on the third day of Gettysburg, to make the great attack that was to break the Union line. This book is one that many will read with an almost too painful intensity, and that no one will read without a quickening heartbeat and a rising sympathy. These letters are written to the woman who became General Pickett's wife not very long after the battle in which he made himself famous. We get from the book a fine conception of the heroic soldier. We cannot better give the sentiment of the book than by quoting three passages that seem most characteristic. The most affecting of these is not by Pickett him-

self, but by his wife. It was after the surrender of Richmond:

With my baby on my arm, I answered the knock, opened the door, and looked up at a tall, gaunt, sad-faced man in ill-fitting clothes, who, with the accent of the North, asked:

"Is this George Pickett's place?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, "but he is not here."

"I know that," he replied, "but I just wanted to see the place. I am Abraham Lincoln."

"The president!" I gasped.

The stranger shook his head and said:

"No, ma'am; no, ma'am; just Abraham Lincoln; George's old friend."

Or take these few words written at Gettysburg of the three brigadiers in his division:

Poor old Dick Garner did not dismount as did the others of us, and he was killed instantly, falling from his horse. Kemper, desperately wounded, was brought from the field and subsequently taken prisoner. Dear old Lewis Armistead, God bless him! was mortally wounded at the head of his command after planting the flag of Virginia within the enemy's lines. I wonder, my dear, if in the light of the Great Eternity we shall any of us feel this was for the best and shall have learned to say, Thy will be done?

Or one more example:

After breakfast [this was after the war] we went as arranged to see Grant. I just can't tell you, my darling, about that visit. You'll have to wait till I see you to tell you how the warm-hearted old warrior met me. . . . When I started to go, Grant pulled down a check book and said: "Pickett, it seems funny, doesn't it, that I should have any money to offer, but how much do you need?"

"Not any, old fellow, not a cent, thank you," I said.

What a loved and loving man those things show! One who could do his duty in a great national strife, and yet never be confined by the narrow borders of one side or the other; one who won renown as a soldier, and yet was at his best simply as a great-hearted man. As we get farther and farther away, the truly great figures of that heroic time stand out more and more clearly. And among the most beautiful characters discovered for us by the trying assay of the great conflict is certainly that of the plain Virginia soldier whose words are here recorded.



ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

BLESSED, in these days when women are doing and demanding so many things, is the home that numbers among its members a feminist of pronounced views and a fair amount of energy and endurance. In such a home, mental gymnastics will be as much a daily rite as dinners, and no one will have a chance to grow stiff in the intellect for lack of constant and vigorous exercise. Conversation will never degenerate into gossip about the neighbors, or, if it does so degenerate, it will acquire a saving grace as part of an "inquiry." The question of whether the A's can really afford an automobile will relate itself, weightily and self-respectingly, to an Investigation into the Causes of the High Cost of Living in our Suburbs; and what used to be only vulgar curiosity as to Mr. B's household harshness or Mrs. C's flirtations will be rehabilitated into part of a questionnaire looking toward the Unification of our Divorce Laws.

But apart from the way in which the presence of an active feminist in a family clothes old vices with the garments of new virtue—in itself a most beneficent attribute—the mere intellectual agility gained by endeavoring to follow the reasoning processes is of enormous advantage to any set of people laboring under the customary over-soothing influence of family life. Cordelia's relatives declare that they have not known a dull moment since Cordelia first emerged as a friend and sister of her sex, marched in suffrage parades, went lobbying to Albany or Washington,

learned to glow with fervor over the immemorial wrongs of womankind, and to aspire gloriously for its coming rights. They say that they are becoming practiced in the "logical flop" and the "emotional somersault," and that as for Cordelia herself, her mind is growing actually double-jointed in its dexterity.

Cordelia, confronted with certain apparent contradictions, says that we are living in an age of transition.

The household first began to appreciate the earnestness of Cordelia's new faith when, at the pen's point, she held up her father and brothers, forcing them to stand and deliver; when she besought—commanded—them to write to their representatives in the State capital concerning the iniquities of the canneries situation. Father and brothers had not given a great deal of thought to the employment of women and children in factories, being rather closely occupied with the usual masculine job of making a living. But, instructed by the ardent Cordelia, they saw the light.

"What chance," Cordelia asked them solemnly, "do those poor women have to bear healthy children, working, as they do, inhuman hours, in inhuman conditions? Can't those legislators who are dillydallying so shamefully with the subject—bribed, of course, by the factory owners," she added, with perfunctory scorn, "can't they see that it is the future of the race that is at stake?"

Cordelia's mother did not think that a girl of Cordelia's age—Cordelia be-



Since Cordelia first emerged as a friend and sister of her sex, marched in suffrage parades, and learned to glow with fervor over the immemorial wrongs of womankind.

ing a grave twenty-five—should talk about the future of the race, and said so; but Cordelia's father was interested in the statements that his daughter was making, and waved aside the old-fashioned conventional objection. And when Cordelia had talked a little longer on the subject, he sent as hearty a letter to his representative as even she could desire. It was, he agreed, an outrage upon humanity that women, the mothers of the race, should imperil their health, and that of their offspring, by taxing labors in unhealthy surroundings. The unborn generations demanded the enactment of whatever law it was that Cordelia was interested in; and for the sake of the mothers of those generations, paterfamilias forewent his after-dinner smoke and postponed his evening paper until he had written the requested letter.

The next time that he was required to bestir himself was in behalf of a bill for pensioning widowed mothers.

"Isn't it an illogical outrage," demanded Cordelia hotly, "that the community should be taxed for the support of orphan children, but that not one penny of the money raised may go to the widowed mothers of half-orphaned children? It costs more, daddy—positively more!—I have the figures right here, if you care to see them"—paterfamilias didn't!—"to care for a half-orphaned child in an asylum than in his mother's home; but the State—stupid dolt, stupid, masculine dolt—the State will not pension a widowed mother so that she may keep her children at home with her. It forces her to part with them, if she is unable to earn enough to keep them with her—and how can she earn, with little children requiring her care? Isn't it silly? If they would give them—I mean if the laws would give the widowed mothers—half what they give the asylums, widowed mothers might keep their children at home, bring them up in the only way that is any good, away from the awful, deadening influence of institutionalism—"

Paterfamilias interrupted with a dubious shake of his head. Once you began that pension business, he averred,

there was no telling where you would end. If you pensioned mothers just because they needed the money, whom would you not be pensioning next? And what would our tax rate be?

But Cordelia flamed with noble wrath over this view. Who should be pensioned if not mothers? Who performed such a service to the State as theirs? What blind creatures were the taxpayers who never murmured over being taxed for dreadnaughts and for standing armies, but who immediately foresaw ruin at the talk of pensioning the agents of life, instead of the agents of death! When armies and navies were doing any of the real work for which they were maintained, they were depopulating the country, putting new and dreadful burdens upon the taxpayers! But to pension poor mothers meant to pension those who were performing invaluable services for the State, who earned their keep, so to speak, by the life-saving labors in which they were engaged.

Cordelia was very eloquent, and she had statistics down at her fingers' tips, and her father and her brothers wrote to their representatives on behalf of the widowed mothers' pension bill. Cordelia taught them to see what a home should be—a place in which a mother, not overworked, should rear her children, teaching them by daily, hourly, close association the things that should make them valuable citizens by and by—truth, directness, industry, thrift, and unselfishness. No one but a mother, Cordelia asseverated in the days of the widowed mothers' pension agitation, could adequately perform these services for children, and she must be free to do it. She must not be a mere, overworked drudge, coming in from a job of office cleaning at eight o'clock at night to discover that her big boy is out on the streets and her oldest daughter gone to the "movies" with the highly undesirable neighbor of the tenement below. She must be enabled to live, not in idle luxury, of course; but without dreadful and prostrating exertion, during the infancy and early youth of her children.

All this was very well, and Cordelia's family felt that, after all, newfangled feminism bore a strong family resemblance to old-fashioned common humanity. But then, upon the heels of their satisfaction, came the question of the married woman teacher. It will become, perhaps, historic, the case of the married Brooklyn teacher who applied to the school authorities for a year's leave of absence in order that she might "bear and rear" a child. After a blazing amount of publicity, after solemn discussions in the board of education and discussions not so solemn in the daily papers; after indignation meetings on the part of teachers, and indignation conversations on the part of conservatives unconnected with the case, the lady's application was denied. Cordelia was in a fine flame of indignation.

"Of all the unjust, antiquated, outrageous, fossil bodies," she cried, "the board of education is the worst—the very worst! If she had asked for a year's leave of absence to go abroad and study, or to stay at home and loaf, she would probably have received it! If she had wanted to learn fancy dancing, or to perfect her Italian accent, or to broaden her mind by a sight of the Aztec dwellings, they would probably have handed her a leave of absence on a silver salver. But no! She only wanted to be allowed to go into retirement for the most important work that a woman can perform, for the most ennobling, uplifting, enriching—and so they wouldn't give her a leave of absence! Oh, what an outrage!"

Cordelia's family gasped and blinked. "But, Cordelia," her father tried gently to elucidate the situation as it appealed to his masculine intelligence, "but, Cordelia! It is undoubtedly because they hold just those views—the school board, or whatever the body is that has just passed unfavorably upon the teacher's application—just those views as to the importance of the work that she will undertake in having a child that they have refused her request. They don't refuse it because they think it is a trifling matter that she can attend to in the intervals of her

work, without troubling them with application for leave. They don't refuse it because they think it less important than fancy dancing and Aztec cities and Italian accents, but because they know it infinitely more important. They think that she should resign, and devote herself to her new job."

Cordelia looked stormily at her parent.

"Is a woman, because she marries," she demanded stormily, "to give up her Career? Is she to sacrifice the work that she loves, that she does well, for which she has fitted herself by years of preparation? Is marriage to be the end of her life as a worker?"

Cordelia's family stared at her, eyes wide, jaws fallen apart. They struggled, unsuccessfully, with their recollections of her arguments in favor of the pensioning of widowed mothers; they tried to recall the reasons why the work of women in factories should be rigorously overseen; they remembered dimly how nobly she had declared that only a semicivilized nation imposed such conditions on its workers that the mothers of young children were forced, in order to keep the breath in their bodies, to abandon those young children for a great part of each day. Struggling with the memory of Cordelia's splendid and recent eloquence on that subject, her family gasped again, and summoned up vigor for an attack upon this unexpected theory of woman's place.

"Is this teacher dependent on her own exertions for a livelihood?" demanded her father, in the syllogistic manner. But Cordelia did not wait for him to proceed with his exposition.

"That is not the point," she declared fervently. "The point is that here is a woman fitted by nature and by education to teach. Since that is her gift, and that is her desire, what difference does it make to the school authorities whether she has a million a year from an inheritance, whether she is supported by her husband, or what her private means are? You can wager that the school authorities do not give jobs to teachers merely because the women



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need the money. Why, then, in the name of all that is logical, should they claim the right of withholding positions because the women may not be in abject need of the money?

"It doesn't matter in the least whether that teacher's husband is rich or poor, employed or unemployed. The thing that matters is that a lot of antiquated old fossils are acting in a way to discourage women from entering the teaching profession. A woman trains herself for a career, not for a brief interval of wage-earning work between her father's house and her husband's. And here these men presume to tell the very fittest and best of teachers—the ones with natural, normal instincts and affections, the ones who aspire to lead full and normal lives—that they are not to teach. It's giving matrimony an awfully black eye, let me tell you," Cordelia finished slantly, in a sort of triumphant threat.

"I suppose," said her father, somewhat heated in his turn, "that you think it better for a woman to regard marriage and motherhood as the casual incidents of life, and her work as her permanent career? How about all that heavy eloquence of yours in regard to the pensioning of widowed mothers, in order that they might be spared the necessity of working outside their own homes, and might be able to devote themselves to bringing up their children as children should be brought up? Where is your consistency?"

Cordelia, of course, was armed with the perennial retort of the illogical—that consistency was the bugbear of little minds; and she also kindly sketched for her father the distinction between a vocation and drudgery. A vocation, it seemed, was a sacred affair, a something in life to which all things else should yield; while drudgery, of course, was a thing to be overcome, evaded, put down. Widowed mothers should be pensioned because the hypothesis about them always was that their form of wage-earning work must be drudgery; unwidowed mothers with ambitious professions should be allowed to pursue them despite family ties, because they

were vocations. Thus did Cordelia train her family in mental gymnastics.

"Cordelia, you are talking nonsense!" the calm, authoritative voice of Cordelia's mother, frequently silent in the family discussions, was heard in weighty cadences. "Your school board, or whatever it was that refused the teacher's request, was entirely right; right from the point of view of school efficiency, I mean. These vocations of which you speak with so much reverence allow no divided allegiance. Your teacher, having had her year's leave of absence 'to bear and rear a child,' would, let us say, come back to her school. If she were any kind of a mother—and that means if she were a decent enough woman to be allowed to teach—she would have about one-quarter of a mind to devote to her classes. The other three-quarters would be at home, wondering if the baby was out on his sleeping porch, wondering if his eyes were shaded from the sun, wondering if the slight 'temperature' he had run the night before had subsided; wondering if the new nurse girl was going to be absolutely and antisepically cleanly in her methods of modifying his milk—"

"Of course," interjected Cordelia victoriously, "a woman earning a teacher's salary would not have to depend on haphazard nurse girls; she will be able to afford a registered nurse, or, at any rate, a graduate baby's nurse to look after her child."

"A registered nurse is twenty-five dollars a week," observed Cordelia's mother mildly. "And what do teachers earn? But apart from the quality of help that the teacher's salary will enable the mother to hire, there are other considerations. If she isn't worrying about the way in which baby is cared for physically, she may be worrying about the way he is cared for emotionally. Does the expensive nurse surround him with an atmosphere of warmth and love? Babies need that as much as they need clean milk—more; I dare say the institution babies get, on the whole, cleaner milk and more hygienic surroundings than thousands of

the tenement-house babies; but the tenement-house babies get love, and their death rate is the lower one.

"No, Cordelia, your teacher, if she is but half a woman, will have but half a mind on even her best days for that 'vocation' of hers. On her worst days—the days when baby has the croup, or the measles, or is in a fever from teething troubles—she simply won't be at school. A substitute and the customary pandemonium will reign instead. The school authorities were quite right from the point of view of efficiency of service.

"As for the woman herself and her duty to her child—why!" exclaimed Cordelia's mother indignantly. "Why, I never heard of anything so absurd as her proposition! Won't there be more babies in that household? Or is this poor, newspaper-heralded, little creature to grow up without brothers and sisters? Is motherhood a sort of 'pick-up' work, like my knitting?"—her vigorous needles flashed—"to be taken up in the intervals of a 'real' occupation? It's ridiculous, that's what it is! Child-bearing and raising is a career in itself. A woman has no more right to expect to pursue another along with it than she has a right to expect to be a practicing physician and a school-teacher, or a busy portrait painter and a school-teacher, or the manager of a hotel and a



"Cordelia, you are talking nonsense!" the calm, authoritative voice of Cordelia's mother was heard in weighty cadences.

school-teacher, or an insurance agent and a school-teacher!"

When people ordinarily silent break into prolonged speech, it frequently happens that their controversialists are nonplussed for a reply. Cordelia was silenced for a few moments. But she began to recover.

"Look at Mrs. E.!" she caroled joyfully. "Look at Mrs. E.! She has not given up her career, and her babies are all flourishing and happy. And her husband is cheerful and contented, and her house comfortable."

Cordelia's mother was forced to admit that the case of Mrs. E. seemed at first sight destructive of her theory. Mrs. E. was a suffrage campaigner. In whatever State of the Union men and women needed enlightenment against a coming referendum, there might Mrs. E. be found, organizing, speaking, traveling by uncomfortable trains to out-of-the-way places, sparing herself not at all. Yet Mrs. E. was healthy, handsome, happy, and she had transmitted these qualities to three children. They dwelt, together with their father—and their mother, when she was at home—and a miraculous housekeeper and a wonderful nurse, in a salubrious suburb, and cheerfully seemed to give the lie to any old fogies maintaining that it is impossible for a mother to have any other career than that of bringing up her children.

The best that Cordelia's mother could do against Mrs. E. was a weak: "Oh, well, wait! They aren't grown up yet. Some day they'll show the lack of a mother's training. Besides," she added, with an agility that seemed to account for some of Cordelia's ability as a "flopper," "they aren't growing up without her training. She isn't with them as much as she ought to be, of course, but she is with them a great deal more than a teacher could be. After all, she doesn't have to be at a certain place by half past eight every morning of the working year; she has periods of being away, but longer periods of being at home. And it is possible for her to turn her work over to some one else without hopeless confusion if she is needed at home. Suffrage campaigning is not like teaching."

"Most people would think it rather more exacting than teaching," grumbled Cordelia. "Addressing audiences in crowded, overheated halls, traveling in all sorts of weather, sleeping in drafty sleeping cars, eating the food of the nondescript, small American hotel—you would say that a woman had to be an ox to stand it! Whereas teaching puts a teacher under no such strain, and ought to leave her much more fresh for her maternal duties."

"That's a theory that doesn't work out," replied Cordelia's mother crisply. "With the single exception of taking care of babies and small children, teaching is the most exacting profession in the world. Eight-day walking, house-wrecking, piano-moving—there is nothing to equal it for pure strain. I'm not so old-fashioned as to say that no married women, no mother even, should do work outside her own home. But I do say that she shouldn't teach."

"They do it in England and Germany," cried Cordelia. "And in those countries there is regular provision made for their absence during the necessary time when they have babies. I don't suppose you think England and Germany know less than we do about educational matters?"

"I certainly do, if that's their custom in their common schools," replied Cordelia's mother, with emphasis. "In spite of the pragmatists, I think that some things may be worked out by the rules of reason, without actual experimentation. And this is one of them."

"There was that case of Mrs. Y. Do you remember it?" asked Cordelia dreamily. She had reverted to the teaching proposition, and her mother, remembering the case of Mrs. Y. perfectly well, first frowned, and then smiled.

"Oh, well," she conceded, in such a tone that Cordelia's father begged for the story of Mrs. Y. Mrs. Y., it developed, had been a teacher, a remarkably successful teacher, until Mr. Y. came along and removed her from the girls' college-preparatory school in which she labored, to a perfectly decorous, pretty, "newly-wed" house in the suburbs. And Mrs. Y., subscribing to all sorts of respectably aged doctrines in regard to the place of the married woman, stayed at home and kept house and wrestled with the cookery and the cook, the time-table, and the local caste system, and eventually with the baby and the nursery-maid problems. And her two or three babies thrived very well, and grew up, after the surprising habit of infants, from thumb-sucking,

bald-headed bundles into romper-clad youngsters, and thence to little kindergartners, and thence to the pupils of the primary schools. And Mrs. Y., being a born teacher, took an interest in their education.

The Y's had selected their suburb for some other reason than the admirable quality of its schools, not realizing how soon that would seem to them the most important attribute of any residential quarter of the globe. And the schools in which the young Y's were receiving their early education were not good schools. Mrs. Y. was troubled as a mother and indignant as a teacher when she discovered how very little her bright boys and her girl were learning, how slowly their minds were developing, how "sloppy," in short, was the whole system of their instruction.

She had not taught little children, to be sure, in her school-teaching days, but she understood her profession, and she knew that her sons and her daughter were wasting time in school. With her husband's consent, she removed them, and undertook the business of their education herself. They responded nobly to her theories; an intelligent system caused them to learn, in half the time, what the unintelligent school system was failing to teach them in a year. But Mrs. Y. was not satisfied. She knew that the school was valuable to children not only for the learning it bestowed, but also for the association it enforced. She didn't want her children to grow up without living in the democracy of a large child organization. Still, she couldn't consent to have their minds spoiled and their time wasted merely to give them playfellows, merely to teach them how to conduct themselves in the rough-and-tumble of a school yard. She debated within herself. Weren't there other mothers in the suburb in the same state as she herself?

There were. Her best friends were in the same state. When two of them learned that Rita Y., for the mere sake of affording companionship to her children, was willing to take their children into her forenoon school, they were

overjoyed. The class of three became a class of eight.

The class of eight has grown to be a class of forty. Mrs. Y. has assistants now. She has developed her theory of early education to a degree that she herself never foresaw when she took her own children out of school. Her own children, by the way, have passed beyond her teaching now, for she has specialized in primary instruction. All neighboring suburbs look upon hers with envious eyes; the progressive ones have petitioned that teachers from their own schools might be allowed to sit at Mrs. Y's feet and take a sort of normal course under her.

"That was rather worth while, wasn't it, mother?" asked Cordelia sweetly, when the achievements of the mother who was also a school-teacher had been related to *paterfamilias*.

"Still, she gave up her work to be at home with her babies while they *were babies*," *materfamilias* insisted.

"There's one thing you women don't seem to think of at all," struck in Cordelia's brother, her youngest, in the tone of one offering an important and hitherto overlooked consideration. "You don't seem to consider how a man, a husband, feels about having his wife go out to work for hire. He may object to it very strongly. Most men like to feel that they can support their own families."

But to his surprise, and a little to his chagrin, not even his mother would uphold him in this antiquated contention.

"It's nothing less than selfishness for a man to refuse to let his wife exercise her talents in whatever she pleases, unless all her time and talent are needed for the bringing up of her children," declared even the elder lady. "It's all a matter of custom—when it is accepted as natural and commonplace for a woman to go on with her profession after marriage, except during the ten or fifteen years of her close devotion to her little children, men will think nothing whatever about it, or about their silly pride in 'being able to support their families.'

"The majority of women have always



*"There's one thing you women don't seem to think of at all," struck in
Cordelia's brother.*

worked, and their work has always had a perfectly definite financial value, even though they have not been paid for it. Any man pompously maintaining that he and he alone supports his household, when his wife is the spending agent, the housekeeper, the cook, the nurse, the seamstress, the hostess, is a sight to make the angels laugh. As a matter of fact, most women will probably always prefer to make their contribution to the wealth of the world in just those forms, and probably in not many households will the wife's earning be duly accredited in the ledger. But as for the husband whose wife earns her living in this way being a more dignified figure than the husband whose wife earns her

living in some other way, and takes actual money and not merely board and lodging as wages—that is all poppycock.

"I don't maintain that married women should not work—I only maintain that married women with children should not have exacting professional duties outside their homes while the children are small. You must not forget that the old-fashioned, home-staying married woman, whose disappearance causes so much alarm, so many misgivings, as to the future of the home, contributed a great deal more to the wealth of the world from within her home than does the modern woman."

"Woman's work," struck in Cordelia oracularly, "has left the home. She

should be allowed to follow it without detriment to her husband's reputation as a provider, without detriment to her own standing. The only stipulation should be that she should have some sort of power to control conditions in the places to which she must follow her work, as she used to be able to control them when her work was at home."

"Doesn't she have her house to keep, her babies to attend to, just as much as ever?" demanded the unconvinced young gentleman belligerently.

"She doesn't grow her own flax; she doesn't card and spin it. She doesn't spin and weave her wool. She buys her soap—she doesn't make it in a great soap kettle. She buys her children's

rompers and frocks from a clothing store which has bought them by the ten thousand from a factory. She probably buys most of her own clothes ready-made. Her husband certainly no longer employs her talent as a needle-woman to make him trousers and coats—admit you wouldn't be caught dead in a suit of clothes of mother's devising!"

The youth admitted it.

"There you are!" caroled Cordelia triumphantly. "Those were the things the old-fashioned, home-staying woman did at home. In addition, she baked the bread that she now buys from the baker; she made the jellies and preserves with which an obliging grocer now supplies her. She made butter, she milked cows; nowadays they are milking cows by machinery, and they are separating the cream from the milk by machinery, and the farmer is carrying the milk to the village creamery in a farm automobile; and he buys his butter from that creamery, and also his cheese. His wife used to make the cheese. And ten to one she taught her children at home.

"You know the old picture—the colonial mother, a rifle ready for need at her elbow, a New England primer on her lap, from which she instructs her older offspring in the beginnings of literature and morals, while she rocks the cradle of her youngest with her foot, and knits her good man's socks with busy fingers, occasionally rising to stir the porridge cooking on the stove! That was the sheltered, protected, cared-for home life of the past. That was what the womanly woman of old was doing—and she was truly, magnificently womanly, doing her full share—and more—toward the creation of the nation, toward the production of wealth.

"I tell you, the old-fashioned woman that is such a fetish with the conservatives—the old-fashioned, sheltered, protected woman, with a baby in her arms and a rose in her hair, waiting at the cottage gate—fresh, rested, tranquil, and leisured—for the stalwart, old-fashioned man, plowman, or harvester, or miller, or driver, to come home—is almost a myth! The woman of early days worked so hard that it often took two or three of her to keep a man—and a hard-working man at that!—companioned to the end of his days. Read your old country-churchyard epitaphs; see on how many tombstones it is proved that Ebenezer or Ephraim wore out one, two, sometimes even three wives, consorts, helpmeets!

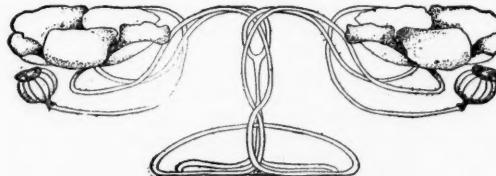
"The old-fashioned woman worked—never doubt it! She may not have been paid money for her work, but she worked none the less for that trifling oversight. She produced wealth for the country. She worked in her own home because, in old times, her business was there—her bleaching, weaving, spinning, sewing. The home was the old-fashioned domestic factory; it was the old-fashioned school. Believe me, mothers worked in those days—they taught, they manufactured—and no one thought the worse of them for it. And so it must be still!"

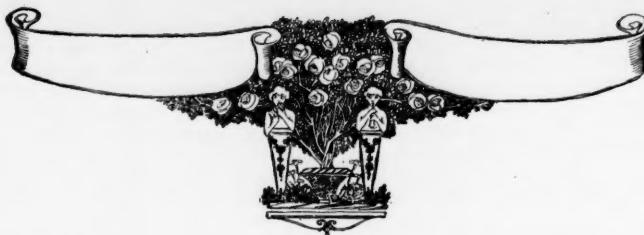
Cordelia finished on the high note of triumphant prophecy.

"Then how about this widowed mothers' pension?" irreverent youth demanded. "And why, if married teachers must be free to teach outside their homes, must widowed mothers be tenderly protected against the necessity?"

And then it was that Cordelia made her admission.

"We are," she said, "in an age of transition."





Building Up a Shapely Neck

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

THE latter-day revival of directoire and empire modes calls attention to the lamentable scarcity of presentable necks among our women; and although collarless, and even low-cut, waists for day wear enjoy continued favor, unattractive necks repel one's artistic sense in greater and greater number. It is true that among very young girls, round, firm, white throats are frequently seen, and now and then, of course, a woman of maturer years may be so fortunate; but, as a rule, a shapely neck is rare after the twenty-fifth year.

The neck shows and resents ill treatment and neglect more pronouncedly than the face or hands; it is here that the first telltale evidences of departing youth are seen. Young women who have never worn the high, stiffly boned, vicelike collars adopted for at least a generation by all womankind until the recent revolt against them, may still retain the firm contour that only perfect freedom of muscular action gives.

The broken-down columns and disfigured necks so generally seen are caused in large measure by the restricted power of the underlying tissues and organs after being subjected for years to hard, unyielding pressure from without, and this is the effect produced by tight bands and collars; this fact is far more serious than is ordinarily understood, for in the throat is situated the life-giving, rejuvenating *thyroid* gland, pressure upon which interferes so much with its functioning properly that old age has been traced to this cause alone.

Furthermore, the neck contains the organs of the voice; it assists in conveying air to and from the lungs, and food to the alimentary tract; it incloses powerful blood vessels and nerves; it is, in fact, the great portal of entrance to the body itself, and the medium of communication between the brain and the other vital organs; so it has a far greater significance than appears upon casual observation.

It has often been remarked, and in an envious manner, too, by the gentler sex, that in this respect men retain youthful outlines and a healthy musculature from early manhood into comparative old age, and this is directly attributable to lifelong freedom of restricting bands and a consequently greater freedom of motion. It is true that most men habitually wear stiff collars, but they do not clasp the underlying tissues with a vicelike grip, interfering with, and well-nigh destroying, their usefulness.

The neck, it must be remembered, is a *member of motion*, and is used in nearly every act of the individual. Its tremendous power is frequently demonstrated by high-class acrobats, who perform the most remarkable feats of strength by means of its vibrant capacity.

The neck must conform to the remainder of the body, otherwise it will be disproportioned and out of harmony. We may all admire long, "swanlike" throats, but only in a proper setting; no woman should covet or envy that which would be unsuitable to her own conformation, but must bend all her energies to develop what is distinctively her own.

Almost every one can cultivate a graceful neck, which is not to be confounded with a long or thin neck. It should be rather long, yet one element of its graceful lines lies in its correct proportion; it must harmonize with the shoulders and bust, as well as with the head. If it does this, it may even be short, and yet retain this quality of grace, but it must be molded in a cir-

cular form, have a clear color, be smooth and polished in texture, and intelligent and graceful in motion. These necks were not rare in the old days, when low-cut gowns were universally worn; and that they can be cultivated and restored is proven every day by those who give such matters the attention they deserve.

Opera singers always have beautiful necks. Why? Because they develop them; *they build them up*; not only in the course of preparation for their profession — for singers are taught how to breathe before they are taught to sing—but they are also made to understand the necessity of possessing full, rounded, white throats, because an audience delights in satisfying its sense of beauty with the eye as well as with the ear. For these twofold reasons, opera singers go through a systematic course of physical - culture exercises, the object being to build up, to round out



This exercise develops a line for an exquisite neck.

the throat.

The peasants of France have most wonderful necks, not only because they are entirely free from the bondage of clothes and wear the same unrestricted garb generation after generation, but because they carry heavy burdens on their heads, and so develop the muscles of the neck. The principle is the same as in the hand-resisting exercises. A few minutes devoted to these exercises morning and night will soon effect a change in the most unpromising neck, and if persevered in for one month, they will obliterate many awkward angles, and mold the neck into graceful lines.



Curry the skin with a flesh brush.

One can either sit or stand, whichever is most convenient.

First, place the hand at the back of the head just below the crown. As you try to press the head backward, the hand should resist the effort. If you look, you will notice that this force makes every muscle in front of the neck stand out prominently.

Allow the head to drop forward into the hand, which is held against the forehead just over the eyes. Press the head down, and at the same time resist this forward pressure with all your strength by pressing the head back; as in the other exercises, the muscles become tense and rigid, sagging, "lumpy" muscles are straightened out, hollows are filled in, and ugly lines transformed into curves.

One of the most graceful lines in Mrs. Langtry's exquisitely graceful body is that running from the ear to the point of the shoulder. It is the consuming desire of all women who know its artistic value. Many women possess it and do not know it; others have broken down this lovely line with tight bandages. As said before, one's build

may necessitate a short line here, but even so, cultivation will effect a wonderful change.

Now, to develop this line of beauty and give to the neck a grace essentially feminine, press the hand against the temple, using the same force as before; with the right hand press the right temple; drop the head over toward the right shoulder; force the hand firmly against it, and press backward with considerable zeal. The shoulder muscles will feel the strain their entire length. Exercise

first one side, then the other, being most careful not to exercise one side more than the other, unless the two sides are unequally developed.

It will be observed that these "exercises" are extremely simple, but that they are marvelously effective as easily demonstrated by any woman who is ambitious to build up a shapely neck. Lying comfortably in an easy-chair, and swathing the throat in emollients, will decidedly *not* build up a firm muscular column. Massage, even when given by so-called professional masseurs in the average beauty parlors, is wholly *inefficacious*. The neck must be built up by conscious endeavor from within. Rolling away an excess of adipose tissue by means of a rolling pin, *et cetera*, *et cetera*, is a useless expenditure of time; the above simple methods will accomplish this; but external measures *must* be applied to overcome the evidences of age displayed by a dry, yellow skin, discolorations from the use of high collars, a skin coarsened by neglect, and similar conditions that prevent sensitive women from exposing the neck in public.

(Continued on second page following.)

Why Women Lack Health, Grace and Beauty of Form

By Andrew H. Hamilton

THE average woman of today lacks in Health, Grace and Beauty of Form because she is ignorant of the requisites of health and knows no more about her body than a child. Instead of exercise which would give her grace and health, she confines herself to housework or such simple duties as tend to destroy the freedom of bodily movement, stiffening and aging her when she is scarcely out of her teens.

Health is a matter of conforming to the laws of right living. True grace of movement is the result of thorough bodily control—of making housework, or any work, an aid in securing this, instead of the cause of losing it. Beauty of Form is something that can be attained by anyone who will study and apply the knowledge gained. This has been proven in many different ways.

I have seen women, corpulent and without shape, restore the graceful lines of youth by devoting a few minutes daily to the care of their bodies. I have seen others, many pounds under weight, angular and lacking in everything attractive, regain their normal weight and a beautiful figure. Stories of marvelous recoveries of health are no less frequent.

Women should realize that health and beauty can never be obtained and kept except through the observance of Nature's laws. Miss Kellermann, known the world over as the "Perfect Woman" and most wonderful dancer and diver on the stage, is a most striking example of what may be accomplished by properly directed exercise and sane living.

You must have heard her story—how as a weak, puny and deformed child she was compelled to wear braces upon her legs. Had she been content to live on in this way, she probably would be a burden on someone today instead of the Perfect Physical Woman. She might now be living on, hopelessly wondering why she was denied the health which was her birthright.

What she has accomplished was not the result of any great new scientific principle for health or development. The wonderful change was wrought by keeping before her the fact that every human body has the power within itself to be healthful and beautiful, if help instead of hindrance is but given it.

The great difficulty with which one must contend, is to select the real from the mass of contradictory theories and principles which have been expounded by over-enthusiastic or unscrupulous persons.

It took a number of years and involved a great many disappointing and discouraging experiences, but in the end she indubitably proved that a woman can be absolutely what she wills. She has proved that if one is too thin, too fleshy; if she is over or under-developed in any part of her body, the proper system will bring parts to perfect proportions. She has demonstrated that it is possible to develop the back of one's arm without affecting the front, to develop one side of the neck, one hip or one limb, without affecting the other. This is one of the most interesting and wonderful features of Miss Kellermann's methods, and, in all likelihood, is due to her wonderful knowledge of anatomy.

Volumes have been written on various methods for developing the figure and attaining health and beauty, but the most interesting and attractive book I have ever read is one written and published by Miss Kellermann herself, entitled "The Body Beautiful." This book contains many photographs of Miss Kellermann and others, showing correct and incorrect carriage, how the body may be built up or reduced to normal, symmetrical lines, and various chapters dealing with every phase of health and body building.

No woman vitally interested in self-advancement can afford to miss this little book, for it means the complete revitalization and reorganization of her body. To those addressing Miss Kellermann, Suite 109 S, 12 West Thirty-first Street, New York City, enclosing two cents, to cover postage, she will gladly send a copy of this book free.

If you are one of the women who would make the most of yourself, physically and mentally, send for this book immediately while the edition lasts. Prove for yourself that it is not necessary to suffer physical ailments, or deficiencies in appearance or figure, and that it is possible to remodel yourself and enjoy a higher plane of living.

To deviate a moment, this is the case with a great many women who really long to wear collarless gowns, but refrain because the neck is unsightly. To these the suggestion is made: eschew all collars and the like in the privacy of your own home, adopt the methods, herein outlined of building up and restoring the tissues, and in time it will assuredly be possible for you to appear with uncovered neck in public.

It is of first importance that the skin be bleached. Mild bleaches may be corrective in many instances where the discolorations are not of long standing. The favorite bleaching agent abroad is arsenic. Now cucumbers are grown in great abundance in this country, and their juice, especially that of the ripe rind, contains this element; therefore, the juice of cucumber, either alone, or incorporated with other agents into a bleaching lotion or cream, constitutes an admirable means of whitening the skin.

Formulae for making these delightful preparations will be sent to any one desiring them.

For obvious reasons it is not advisable to print a formula containing arsenious acid, but sometimes a stronger bleach than a vegetable juice is demanded, and in this event the French arsenic lotion should be used. It gives the skin a beautiful transparency, while bleaching it withal. Directions for using this formula will be sent only to such applicants as really require it.

When the skin of the neck is rough and dark from years of neglect, it requires vigorous treatment with hot water and a flesh brush to curry it into condition. The usual bath mitts, or Turkish towel bands, will prove satisfactory in ordinary cases, but not in those where the skin feels like and resembles a piece of emery paper. This yields in time to the flesh brush, which must be used with discretion, so that the currying process not only clears the skin, but stimulates the activities of the underlying blood vessels and other organs, which in time react upon the tissues and restore their youthfulness. A bland soap can be applied to the brush, and where the skin will permit a more

stimulating cleanser, tincture of green soap gives remarkable satisfaction. If the skin becomes irritated, a soothing cream should be employed after the rubdown.

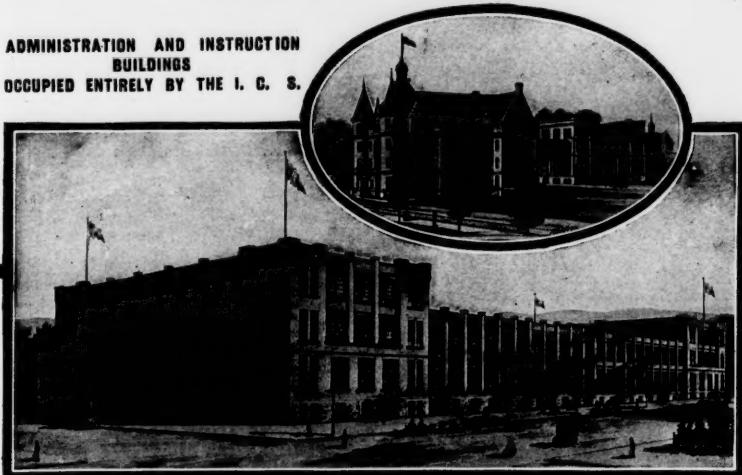
Self-massage is an agent of great efficiency in aiding the simple exercises given above when it is carried out systematically and intelligently. Massage is a valuable form of treatment, but it has fallen from its high estate. It increases the circulation, and, in moving the tissues *under* the skin, which is the secret in massage, the underlying structures are reached and stimulated. Simply moving the fingers over the surface of the skin mechanically means nothing.

Now, when giving oneself massage, it is a capital plan to sit before a mirror and watch the process; this not only increases one's interest in the procedure, but also insures its being carried out more faithfully. Preliminary to the rubbing, apply hot towels about the throat, betweenwhiles scrubbing gently with a bland soap; remove all traces of this and continue the hot applications until the skin is receptive; now massage a few moments, to increase the circulation, and then begin systematically the application of oils or creams with massage. The very simplest are cod-liver oil, olive, almond, or coconut oils. Results that are truly surprising follow the use of these oils; almond and coconut oils are whitening as well, which is something in their favor, while cod-liver and olive oils seem to have a more penetrating effect, and to sink deeper into the tissues. It is well to study the effect of these various oils upon oneself, and to adhere to the use of those that seem more adaptable to one's individual needs. The oils should be slightly warmed before using.

In applying massage, start at the base of the throat and work upward and around, describing small circles. Both hands may be used, but the right is more satisfactory when giving oneself treatment; go well up under the ears with the finger tips, using gentle but firm pressure. The tissues under the chin and down to the collar bones can be grasped between the fingers and rolled

(Continued on second page following.)

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Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechanical Draughtsman	Automobile Running
Mechanical Engineer	Tech. Writing
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
Min. Sup't & Assistant	Poultry Farming
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Textile Manufacturing	Spanish
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	German

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well under them; also those from the center of the chin outward toward the ears.

Fattening creams consist of:

Fresh lard	100 grams
Alcohol, eighty per cent	20 grams
Essence of rosemary	11 drops
Essence of bergamot	11 drops

Here is another:

Tannin	1/2 gram
Lanolin	30 grams
Oil of sweet almonds	20 grams

A fattening cream much liked contains:

Olive oil	1/2 ounce
Cocoa butter	1/2 ounce
Lanolin	1/2 ounce

After massaging the neck carefully, not forgetting the back of it, for ten minutes, wipe off all excess of fats, and apply cold towels; when the flesh is thoroughly chilled, dry with a soft cloth, and apply the following whitening tonic bleach:

Tincture of camphor	1 ounce
Tincture of benzoin	1/2 ounce
Cologne water	2 ounces

Allow the lotion to dry on the skin.

The so-called bracelets of the neck—two lines that run parallel with each other around the center of the throat—are regarded as marks of beauty. Many mistake these for wrinkles. The first evidences of wrinkles do not appear in this situation; the muscles on either side of the larynx begin to break down, and wrinkles may appear here in consequence, but those caused by age show first behind the ears in lines running obliquely, or just beneath the collar bone.

A French wrinkle balm that has a soothing effect upon the skin, and that also supports sagging tissues and removes discolorations, is available to all readers. Soft bandages are saturated in the lotion, and used to bind up the tissues in such a way as to support

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

them; these may be applied at night and removed in the morning.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAUD.—I have always advocated the use of camphor in toilet preparations, and will gladly send you a formula for a camphor cream upon receipt of a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

WILLIE.—You will find this a satisfactory

ASTRINGENT WASH.

Cologne	1/2 ounce
Elder-flower water	6 ounces
Powdered alum	20 grains

Daub on with absorbent cotton.

MRS. A. T. K.—Look well into your daughter's physical condition and you may discover the cause of her continued trouble; meanwhile send a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and full directions for the treatment of pimples and blackheads will be mailed.

JOHN S.—Perhaps you do not drink enough water. This frequently gives rise to dryness of the skin. I suggest that you take at least four goblets of soft water in the course of a day and apply this

LOTION FOR DRY SKIN.

Carbolic acid	10 drops
Glycerin	1 ounce
Rose water	3 ounces

NEW YORK.—I cannot give you the information you request, as I am opposed to the use of hair dyes, but I will gladly send, on proper application, a harmless method for darkening the hair.

BALDNESS.—You may find all you require in an article entitled "Beauty Hints for Men," published in the April, 1912, number of this magazine. If not, write again.

DOROTHY D.—I do not like to publish a formula for the removal of superfluous hair. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a private reply.

AZTEC.—Drugs are never advised through this department, only hygienic measures. You can scarcely hope to reduce such weight without dieting. You really should not wish to continue your present methods, for without proper diet you must remain gross; it cannot be otherwise. The name of a preparation that will sustain you while dieting, having also a mildly reducing effect, will be furnished you upon proper application.



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Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment are sold throughout the world. Send post-card to nearest depot for free sample of each with 32-page book; Newbery, Co., Boston, Mass.; Square, R. Towns & Co., Sydney, N. S. W.; London, Ltd., Caxton Town; Muller, MacLean & Co., Calcutta and Bombay; Potter Drug & Chem. Corp., Boston, U. S. A.

as—Men who shave and shampoo with Cuticura Soap will find it best for skin and scalp.

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FAT POSITIVELY REDUCED

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It's a simple treatment, which you may apply yourself in your own home.

There is positively NO EXERCISING, NO STARVING, NO MEDICINE.

"FATOFF" makes fat fade away from all parts to which it is applied. It reduces the waist line, double chin, fat hips and fat necks. It keeps the skin smooth and youthful, the flesh firm and healthy and enables you to always have a slender and graceful figure.

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